

THE PASSIONS OF LIFE  
BEING THE SEARCH FOR  
AN IDEAL



BY THE SAME AUTHOR  
THE NEMESIS OF NATIONS  
PROBLEMS OF DESTINY

# THE PASSIONS OF LIFE

BEING THE SEARCH FOR AN IDEAL

*by*

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TO  
MY BROTHER  
JAMES VENN PATERSON

*Gefühl ist alles*  
(All is feeling)

—GOETHE

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**M**OST people are familiar with Plato's striking image of the chariot of the soul drawn by two horses, one of them highly bred symbolizing reason and the other low bred symbolizing passion. No one can unyoke those horses, and because they run badly in double harness the chariot and the charioteer are in constant danger of being upset. Plato's figure of speech implies that the problem of reason and passion is insoluble. But not all the passions are coarse and low bred. Some of them, like moral indignation, may be noble, and some, like magnanimity, are magnificent so that without them the human scene would be a dull wilderness. Even Aquinas rejected the doctrine of the Stoics who considered passion as a disease of the soul. And as regards the wilder impulses, may it not be an error to seek the regeneration of feeling outside feeling itself? Reason and passion speak different languages, and there is no mutual understanding. The common phrase "a change of heart" contains the whole psychological truth because it means that the movement from a lower

to a higher emotion is the work of the emotions themselves. Reason never quelled the passions of anger or of love, and mere logic never quelled the passions of politics or of religion. There are doubtless human beings in whom reason predominates. But when the gust of impulse sweeps over the average man or woman the reasoning powers suffer sudden eclipse. In the case of most of us reason is only like the storm cone hoisted as a warning, but the storm cone is itself buffeted by the storm. Besides, it is no solution of the problem of the passions merely to attempt to stamp them out as you would stamp out a fire. It is a fire that is not quenched for the passions have their own peculiar reprisals and revenges.

The following pages offer a brief and non-technical study of some of the main phases of human impulse, and an effort has been made to show that in the ascending scale of the passions the highest is the passion for the Beautiful and that without it life is a mean thing. The book was begun in Spain while the signs and portents of a great social catastrophe were already visible. I remained in Sitges in the Province of Barcelona in order to witness the outburst of some of those passions which I had been studying, and during three months I watched their havoc in Barcelona



and elsewhere. The seismic impulses which shake humanity to its foundations and gather their heat from the fuel of revolution are still active beneath the superficial calm and brightness of civilization. The events of our own time prove that under the fragile enamel and varnish of modern life all the more ruthless passions lie hidden to burst through in a moment. Having seen them at work amid the horrors of the Spanish civil war I became more than ever convinced of the need of a new ideal of behaviour to replace certain ideals which have failed. We owe to the thinkers of antiquity the great doctrine that conduct is good when it is beautiful. Might it not be wise to return to that teaching amid the ugliness, the moral unrest, the international confusion and the crisis of belief which mark our own day?

The pleasant hours of study in the Institut d'Estudis Catalans are now only a memory. I desire to thank the Directors for their kind permission to make use of the *Biblioteca de Catalunya* in the Government Palace at Barcelona, and I should also like to acknowledge the great courtesy which I received from the assistants.

Lastly, I wish to express my obligations to Professor Gilbert Murray who kindly read the proofs.





CHAPTER I

THE INNER WORLD



## CHAPTER I

### THE INNER WORLD

THE famous precept "Know Thyself" is often supposed to be easy of application. There is nothing more difficult. We all start as dark horses in this race of life. We are as frequently surprised by our own strength or weakness in an emergency as by the strength or weakness of other people. To begin with, we are the inheritors of a biological past. In order to be able to know ourselves we should require first to know all the physical, mental and moral characteristics of innumerable ancestors. We wear the coat of flesh which they bequeathed to us, and their blood is running in our arteries. Even supposing, which would be absurd, that each human being is an utterly new and independent agent when he appears in the scene of life and that no hereditary influence whatever could affect him we should still be faced by an insuperable obstacle in the effort thoroughly

to understand ourselves. For in order to obtain complete or even partial self knowledge we should need to know all that happens within our own organism before a single desire or a single thought reaches our consciousness. It is clear that the task is impossible because the roots of consciousness are themselves unconscious. In the act of examining them we should destroy them. They lie living and working beyond our inspection. Besides, if we were able to explore thoroughly even the region of consciousness we should be no nearer the ultimate facts. It would be like taking the section of a river, and trying to explain its current without reference to the force of the current higher up. But the springs of life flow not only downwards from the past but upwards from our own unconscious depths. If there is one fact which should be undiscussed and beyond discussion it is that nature has taken good care that we shall never be able to obey the precept—"Know thyself."

We use the word "mind" which has become an abstraction. It originally meant the act of thinking and in its Anglo-saxon form it was equivalent to memory. It is not a thing or an entity separable from consciousness. It is only a name for a process which we feel but which we cannot explain. If



the avenues of the nobler senses—sight and sound—were closed from the beginning, and if the individual were isolated from all contact with an outside world, “mind” could not exist. Having seen nothing and heard nothing, known nothing and learned nothing, such a human being apart from artificial aid would remain merely an irresponsible, torpid mass. On the other hand, when all the senses are intact how does what we call the mind become not a sluice but a reservoir of impressions with memory as the barrage? The question has never been and can never be answered. The reason is that there can never take place any genuinely scientific explanation of human or indeed of any other consciousness. We are able to study an object outside ourselves by watching its behaviour in relation to its surroundings. For instance, we can register the changes in a heated mass of metal as it cools. But the changes in the human mind cannot be examined in this way. We can only suppose that what takes place in other people’s consciousness is more or less similar to what takes place in our own. Besides, no amount of introspection can produce accurate and scientific results. In our own time the attempt of experimental psychology to take the mental

mechanism to pieces has not solved the problem as to what really happens when a human being feels, perceives, remembers and knows. An immense literature has grown around the subject since the days of Aristotle, but consciousness has never been persuaded to explain itself. It is like a lamp throwing its rays on a pathway only to show that the pathway is blocked. After a long and laborious analysis Hume admitted that he did not know how the self is able to preserve its identity and to prevent its impressions from scattering. Our feelings seem to cluster round a centre which we call the self, and yet it is impossible to imagine the self as a fixed object lodged in the cranium amid the swirl of its impressions. One of the strange facts of human life is that we remain ignorant of the real nature of the forces within us as well as of the forces outside us. We compel both sets of forces to work for us and yet we are not sure of their character. We employ the vast force of electricity, for example, and even introduce it into our houses, but we do not know what it is. Like heat, which used to be erroneously considered as an entity with an independent existence, electricity is only a mode of motion or commotion of matter, and matter itself is undefined



and undefinable. We do not even know what light is. Nevertheless, we compel matter in all its forms—electric, radio-active, gaseous, liquid and solid—to be our servant. We bestow numerous names upon it but it remains intrinsically unknown to us. In like manner in the inner world of mind we become aware of powers whose nature and mode of operation baffle us. Yet those powers—thought, feeling, desire and will—focussed in what we call the self are our sole means for carrying on the world's affairs. We may name a thing, and yet not know it. More dangerous still, the human mind is able to create things or at least to create belief in them merely by the invention of a name. Ever since language was bequeathed to us, indeed, we have been its victims as well as its beneficiaries. Science, like common speech, makes use of misnomers. The word "electricity," for instance, is wholly inadequate as a definition or description of the force for which it stands. It comes straight from a Greek word which means "amber." For it had been discovered by accident that amber when rubbed against other substances confers upon them a peculiar property. If it is rubbed against two pieces of silk ribbon and if the ribbons are suspended they will stand out from each other.



The amber has created in them the positive and the negative poles of what we call electricity. But the force in question is widely distributed throughout nature, and amber is only an insignificant representative of it. The word "electricity," if transformed literally into its English equivalent, would be "ambericity," which sounds like a barbarism, but the one word is no more barbarous than the other. Nevertheless, in spite of its defectiveness as a representative term "electricity" has installed itself in all civilized languages, and it has created in the human mind the image of a dazzling and dangerous force. But there are many other words which bear a weight of meaning for which they are constitutionally unfit. We attach special importance to the words "spirit" and "spiritual" but the real meaning of "spirit" is merely physical because it signifies "breath" from *spirare, to breathe*. Because breath is air and air is elusive and mysterious human imagination was tempted to take a leap into the limelight of the supernatural where a world of spirits was supposed to be. So that in so far at least as terminology is concerned the entire superstructure of belief in spiritual hierarchies is founded on the improper use of a word which has only a physiological

meaning. In the treatment of the problem of human personality we have to rest content with the word "self" which is supposed to represent a permanent, unchanging unity within the body but wholly distinct from it. The truth is, however, that there is no permanent, unchanging self. There is a procession of selves, and as we advance in life we drop one after the other. We cannot take consciousness to pieces. But we can detach theoretically from every individual the artificial self which has been formed by contact with his surroundings. Impressions of childhood are the indelible ink of the mind, and are often as irremovable as birthmarks. If the newly born heir to a kingdom were transferred to the household of a bricklayer and if the newly born child of a bricklayer were transferred to the royal palace, both infants, although certain latent characteristics might afterwards appear, would inevitably take on the colour and assume the habits of their environment. The self which becomes more or less civilized is first formed in the family where it unconsciously absorbs the special notions, beliefs and prejudices which happen to be in the family tradition. Later come fresh accretions as the individual moves from one stage of experience to the next. The building up



of the self is laborious and slow, and the child's memory is a blank not because it has forgotten anything but because as yet it has nothing to remember. It is only towards the end of the fourth or fifth month after birth that the physiological development of the brain in its main lines has been more or less completed, and that the associative cerebral fibres and the cells corresponding to them begin to learn their functions automatically. In every sense of the word we all start with a clean slate if we leave aside for a moment the question of hereditary disposition. The infant brain is like an electric battery awaiting its charge. If by a reversal of the process we could withdraw from a human being piece by piece every detail of the training he had received he would be once more reduced to the blank condition of childhood, and there would remain to him only the nucleus of inherited instincts. The proof of the artificial character of the civilized self is shown in the differences of behaviour and outlook according to class, nation and race. The movement away from civilization expressed by writers like Lahontan, Diderot, Rousseau and Thoreau and by the modern advocates of a return to paganism is a sign of the impatience of the civilized self with

its artificial burdens. That movement towards simplification had already begun in antiquity.

It is what I may venture to call the biological self, that is to say, the fundamental sensation of life, which remains constant, whereas what I have called the artificial self varies with the influences to which the individual is compelled to submit. If the artificial self which is the product of civilization were wholly dismantled we should return to the state of nature having dropped all the conventions. The modern personality is a complex mechanism mainly created by city life. The mental inventory of an agricultural labourer, especially if he has not yet come under the influence of the cinema, is totally different from the mental inventory of the town dweller. Man is by nature an earth worker, a tiller of the fields or a huntsman, and the superfluities with which he has surrounded himself have covered up and concealed the biological self with which he started. But he always returns to it to satisfy the primitive cravings of hunger, thirst and sex. Even in civilized and ultra civilized conditions, especially in moments of anger, passion and panic the real self reappears. The modern self which lives and moves and has its being in a modern community is an unstable



coalition of opinions, judgements and prejudices which have been suggested by the environment. In denuding it of all that it has acquired, in taking it to pieces leaf by leaf like an artichoke we rediscover the primitive, non moral self of nature and childhood. As we have just seen the centralization of consciousness is scarcely established until the early months of existence have already passed, and the same lack of centralization reappears in old age when the memory fails and the process of irremediable dilapidation has begun. We move between the zero of childhood and the zero of old age. Between those two negative points some nine milliard cells of the cerebral cortex remain busy. Yet this living machine of astonishing delicacy and sensibility is liable to interruption, damage and disease. We are tempted to ask, therefore, why, if mind is a free and independent organ, it should be at the mercy not only of external but of internal forces? If it is "spiritual" it should be immune from the action of pathological causes. But it does not possess even the protective apparatus of the sensitive plant which, at the moment of shock, closes its leaves, and, like certain animals and insects, feigns death when threatened by danger. The mind has no armour for

self protection, and in severe concussion there takes place the annihilation of consciousness. Moreover, chemical changes in the shape of asphyxiating gases cause mental eclipse. When the oxygen of the air falls below a certain level intellectual effort ceases, and the memory refuses to continue its work of registration. In extreme old age when the degeneration of the grey matter of the brain and of the corresponding cells and fibres is in progress and when no renewal can take place there is a return to the mental emptiness of early childhood. Only the lower senses of touch, taste and smell remain, and what have been called "the nobler cells" desert us.<sup>1</sup> Thus between the zero of childhood and the zero of old age, what we call the self makes its appearance. What is this self? Is it the wick of the candle burning away simultaneously with the column of wax?

Sometimes a discovery consists in showing that nothing at all can be discovered. Owing to the difficulties of the case this is the situation as regards the human self, for, as we have just noticed,

<sup>1</sup> "Desertan las celulas nobles." "La ruina lenta, continua y sin posible reparacion, provocada por el trabajo de las neuronas cerebrales."—*Ramon y Cajal*, *Charlas de Café*, page 80. Madrid, 1932.



when we ask for an explanation or definition we are offered the word "breath." It might be replied that one and the same self persists throughout all the changes that take place. But this statement seems to take for granted what needs to be proved. If you say that, after all, feeling must imply a self that feels, then, since an animal also feels it too must be in possession of a self. But who can tell us what the animal self is? In the following pages, therefore, we shall make use of the word to denote the focus of sensation. Writers like Hume who disbelieved in the existence of the "soul" as a separate entity within the body continued to employ that word to indicate the sense of relative permanence which seems to last amid the flux of impressions. In the same way we shall refer to the self as the feeling of cohesion within consciousness although we cannot explain what causes the impressions to cohere. The process and mechanism of coherence defy any genuine analysis. For what does analysis mean? It means a "loosening" or "undoing," the dissolution of a thing into its elements. But it is obvious that this can never be achieved in the case of consciousness and still less in the case of the unconscious. We cannot dissect the self. From psycho-analysis we have received a

great deal of description but no real analysis. It is a kind of inspection by proxy. Besides, its distinguished protagonist admits that we reach a knowledge of the unconscious only "after it has been transmuted or converted into consciousness." But if you convert the unconscious into the conscious you are not examining the unconscious at all for it has already lost all its characteristics. You are examining what is conscious. When, farther, it is maintained that "unconscious sensations exist" this statement seems equivalent to saying that there can be sensations without sensation. Although it is confessed by the head of the school that the phrase "unconscious sensations" is "not wholly correct or completely justified" the conception underlying it is made the basis of the doctrine of "the psychic unconscious." It would seem to be more reasonable to speak of the unconscious as only potentially psychic. For if you already endow it with the same supreme quality with which you endow the conscious they are on the same level, and there is no intrinsic difference between them. In that case the task of the psychoanalyst who proposes to offer us what he calls a "psychology of the depths" (*Tiefenpsychologie*) is at an end before it has properly begun.



✍ It is precisely because the sub-conscious remains inaccessible that it contains an unknowable whose action cannot be predicted. There is no doubt that at a given moment our consciousness forms a mere fragment of our being. The subconscious is the breeding place of instinct and the region where the passions smoulder. But if the examination of mental experience begins with the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious then, so far as mere awareness is concerned, feeling is the primordial fact. It is the *ne plus ultra* of our waking existence. We do not directly come into contact with the unconscious. We only presuppose it and infer it. Besides, feeling precedes knowing for at birth the child knows nothing but he already feels. He is like a ship launched without the engines which are put in afterwards. The earliest and the simplest expression of selfhood is a state of feeling, and it remains the essential expression of the life of the adult being. Like the surd in mathematics feeling is the irreducible element in the human mind. The surd is a quantity which has no rational root. This is true of feeling which is the surd of consciousness and has no root in the reason. For it cannot be expressed in terms of the reason. It is true that reason does not express

itself in terms of feeling ; yet without a sensorium, that is to say, without a focus of sensation there could be no operations of reason or of any other faculty. If we remove from a human being all the accretions which have grown round his personality but which sooner or later drop off as the physical and mental organisms decay we discover a fund of feeling which persists till the end. Even when the loss of memory has involved the loss of self identity the individual has not yet perished because he has not lost the sensation of life. In the case of aphasia or drunkenness or paralysis the mental faculties may suffer eclipse but, at least partially, sensibility remains. When the reign of feeling ceases life itself or consciousness ceases, and there can be no interregnum. An utterly passionless being may be said not to exist, and a purely intellectual existence independent of the service of the senses is unknown to us. We should not, therefore, be astonished by the fact that not intellect but emotion is the governing factor in human affairs. Whether that circumstance is fortunate or unfortunate does not for the moment concern us, although it is obvious that feeling lies at the basis of all that is worst as well as of all that is best in human nature. When we come to con-



sider the psychology of panic we shall notice the return of the human mass to the wave-like movements of great hordes and herds of horses struck by contagious terror in the prairie. Even in the case of the coolest and the coldest mind feeling only lies dormant, and, indeed, so far as the requirements of the body are concerned it continually announces itself. Men may begin an argument with great moderation and may preserve their self control till the end, yet the flushed faces and the increasing emotional tone betray that the feelings have been stirred. Moreover, the intellectual apparatus is always set in motion for the purpose of satisfying some need or vindicating some human claim. Even an astronomer or a mathematician at the moment of quitting his labours comes away with a feeling either of contentment or discontentment according to the results. And indeed the most unimpassioned intellectual pursuit may become an object of passion. Let us notice, however, that whereas we can take an intellectual process to pieces, show what amount of assistance has been received from various sources or why the reasoning is at fault or how many necessary elements of information have been made use of or neglected we cannot dismember feeling.

Knowledge comes by accretion from the outside but feeling is inborn and primitive, and like an artesian well is fed unseen. When a human being says that he is hurt in his feelings he means that he is hurt in the centre of his being. The logic of feeling however ramshackle it may be is the most formidable of all logic. There is a sense in which even the most outrageous feeling has a right to expression because it is like a natural force. It may be vile, but, as in the case of a natural force, you must either avoid it or subdue it. For there is no arguing with feeling. It cannot be educated like the intellect because it remains obstinate and recalcitrant, and if it changes at all it changes from within. It is this insecure character of feeling which constitutes the main hazard of all human relations and especially the relation of marriage. In the case of feeling you must take it or leave it or destroy it. It is like quarrelling with a root. You may tear up the root, and then the plant dies. We can juggle with arguments and definitions and words, and probably almost every statement that can be made can also be denied. But in the case of feeling you might as well argue with an oncoming wave. There is, further, no glossary or vocabulary for primary and ultimate sensations.



There are no synonyms. If you are in pain you may, indeed, be able to say that it is dull or sharp or winding like a screw. But that is about all. You describe pain best by merely repeating the word. You have reached a region where definitions fail, and you are face to face with primary facts. It is the same with pleasure. You may note different degrees of pleasure and pain, the ebb and the flow, but in their essence both elude definition. It is not in an intellectual concept that the self has its seat but in some form of sensation. I accept Brentano's identification of feeling and volition, and perhaps it is the most important discovery in modern psychology. For as we shall see later what we call the will is only feeling in motion, attaining or attempting to attain its object. From none of the great movements of the mind is feeling ever absent as, indeed, Wordsworth recognised when he described a thought striking along the brain "and flushing all the cheek." Emotion can be expressed only in emotional terms and sensation in terms of sensation. If you say "This has a horrible taste" and you are asked to explain why it is horrible you may, of course, reply that it is too sweet or too bitter or very nauseous. But when you are invited to say what you actually feel you can only

repeat the adjectives. Feeling is so fundamental that we are able to use the expression "fellow feeling." We do not say so easily "fellow intellect" although such intellects do certainly exist. The mere word "feeling" is profoundly significant because it indicates the primordial character of what it represents. It means "to grope" especially with the palm of the hand as we do when we lean on a balustrade on going down a dark stair. And we say "feeling our way" as if that is the first form of mental as well as of physical locomotion. Some words are like lanterns throwing light into the recesses of our being.↵

Now, Descartes in his effort to discover a sure starting point for his intellectual method made it clear to all the world that it is not possible to doubt about everything. Even the mind saturated in scepticism cannot doubt that it doubts. It is fully convinced of at least one thing—its own activity. As a result Descartes chose for his starting-point his famous sentence—"I think therefore I exist."<sup>1</sup> But he might have begun lower down. He

<sup>1</sup> "Remarquant que cette vérité-je pense, donc je suis-était si ferme et si assurée que toutes les plus extravagantes suppositions des sceptiques n'étaient pas capables de l'ébranler, je jugeais que je pouvais la recevoir sans scrupule pour le premier principe de la philosophie que je cherchais."—*Discours de la Méthode*, Quatrième Partie. Page 33. Ed. Paris Gallimard.



could have said "I feel, therefore I exist," and this statement would be true even although the feeling were the result of an illusion of the senses. We do not begin with thinking so that a new point of departure and one perhaps closer to life would be—"Sentio, ergo sum." Life begins with the sensations of hunger and thirst and to these is added later the sensation of sex. It is out of this primary source of feeling to which all the senses become later contributory that human energies arise. Feeling has the inevitableness of a natural force. If water were kept during a hundred years in a circular reservoir and if the valve of exit were then opened the water, supposing it had not evaporated, would escape freely and would immediately lose the shape which had been imposed upon it during that long period. But nature possesses many other forces which like air or gas, radium or quicksilver are essentially disobedient and fugitive and are always ready to free themselves from any prison in which they may have been confined. Feeling too is one of those forces. It can change its form rapidly and break away in new directions. It is, in fact, this restless and incalculable element which has been the prime mover in all the perturbations of the individual

as well as in all the revolutions of the mass. In the following chapters I will attempt, with the reader's indulgence, to make some study of the main impulses which have governed human action and which have revealed human passion. We shall thus take all Feeling to be our province.





CHAPTER II

PHASES OF FEELING



## CHAPTER II

### PHASES OF FEELING

THE more rebellious elements known as the passions have been the theme of all moralists, and special attention has been given to the passion of love. In nature there is nothing moral or immoral, and it is only in the human world that natural instincts undergo supervision and control. The moral code, although it differs according to climate and race, is an attempt to canalize human passion for the sake of social order. Much that is erroneous has been written on the subject of human love, and the word "love" itself is perhaps the most unfortunate in the language. Like a maid of all work it has been allotted the most diverse tasks. We speak of the love of parents, of children, of art, books, music and flowers, of perfume, horses, dogs, and cats, of the love of mankind and of God. But no single term is capable of bearing such a load of meaning. The psycho-

analysts have seized it in order to suggest that some hidden sexual significance can be discovered in every inclination. This abuse of the word shows the need of some stricter use of it although it may be admitted that the original meaning of "love" is somewhat startling. If we go back to the beginnings love in its primitive sense of sexual covetousness should be distinguished from affection. The word "affection" means "applying oneself to another" in that other's interest. But in its primitive form as an egocentric passion love was predatory, and meant seizure. In the realm of nature love has not yet come under the vigilant eye of the moralist. Even in its crude form love may undoubtedly be interlaced with affection, but in so far as it is only a rudimentary passion the affection which accompanies it may die away as the physical craving exhausts itself. In this sense, paradoxical as it may seem, affection reaches its highest form only when the physical impulse has ceased. For in affection self interest as expressed by sex hunger—the hunger of the hart for the hind and of the savage for his mate—has been subdued.

Buffon with the disconcerting candour of the naturalist declared that in love the most impor-



tant element is the physical—*dans l'amour il n'y a que le physique qui soit bon*. He deplored the fact that moralists had attached moral ideas to an act of nature. But he and other advanced French thinkers of the eighteenth century in their impatience of conventional restraints too often ignored the fact that such restraints are inevitable if human society, at least in its European form, is not to fall into chaos. It may be, indeed, that although in the western world marriage has long been considered as a sacrament the real sacrament is often a divorce. In many cases the matrimonial bliss which has perished is followed by the bliss of separation. The word "sexual" is somehow an ugly word, but it implies one of those primary facts on which innumerable other facts depend. Nature is not only a vast granary for the seeds of foodstuffs. It is also an inexhaustible granary for the seeds of every animal species, and the individual is the transmitter. This is the central fact, but it becomes an awkward and sometimes a dangerous fact as soon as human society is established on a moral basis. For the individual is then face to face with a new problem of adjustment. As a unit in nature he is merely a continuator of the species, but as a unit in the world of mankind he comes



under the law of repression. Nature calls him one way, society another. All the irregularities of sex are an attempt on the part of individuals to elude both nature and human society in order to convert into an end in itself what was originally contrived only as a means. "Adultery" is another ugly word because we happen to be living under a monogamous system. Modern society condemns adultery and is justified because it wrecks the life of the home. But if the heroes of the Old Testament suddenly appeared in our midst with their plethora of wives and concubines we should have to send them to jail. On the other hand, if Europeans were Moslems a plurality of wives would be permissible and legal. The main fact in this tedious problem of sex is generally ignored. It is that under cover of the normal life of the individual an insurrection smoulders. The region of instinct is a kind of *imperium in imperio* and certain forces seem to lie beyond the control of the mind. Nature has loaded some individuals more than others as seed carriers, and adolescence is a physical crisis which is sometimes prolonged into middle life. One of the remarkable facts in biology is that although an organism is old yet it continues to be a seed carrier, and the seed is unaffected by

age. Youth and virility still belong to the leaven of nature which subsists even in an organic structure which is ageing. Youth is like a ~~receding~~ star. But the impetus of sex remains adolescent, and therefore the tragedy of love continues to be played long after youth may have vanished. Certain elemental forces garrisoned in the organism are capable of shaking it to its foundations, and just because love as a passion is inextricably entangled with instinct and appetite it has been one of the great disturbing agents in human life. Probably no other has caused either so much happiness or so much havoc. Its peculiarity as a passion lies in the fact that with scarcely a moment's warning it can transform itself into its opposite. The disillusioned idolator throws down the idol he had raised. In some of his most brilliant verse De Musset curses the woman whom he had adored. The theme of the love sonnet sung by the nightingale is the same as the theme of the sonnets of Petrarch.<sup>1</sup> But the human lover is face to face with an infinitely more intricate situation, and Petrarch over and over again arraigns his passion as the enemy of his peace. The seismic disturbance of the impulses is felt not

<sup>1</sup> "Regnano i sensi, e la ragione è morta."—Sonnet CCXI.



only in the physical foundations of life but in the upper edifice of thought and feeling which has been painfully built over them. Sir Thomas Browne deplored the fact that the human race cannot be propagated like trees, and the Stoics considered only that man wise who was devoid of passion. But if all mankind became passionless the race would decline and disappear. The dilemma is that apart from the entanglement with the under-self of instinct the upper self cannot reach expression, and cannot even come into existence at all. Everything was once wild and tends to return to the wild. In the moment of passion nature obliterates the human being as such, and unless we are to consider man as a biological blunder we must accept the lower partnership with which his mind is inevitably linked. We have taken over only one divinity from the ancient world and her name is Aphrodite.

Let us look closely at the word "love." What does it mean? Some of our purest memories gather round that word, and yet it comes out of strange, troubled depths of prehistoric passion. "Love" is derived from an Indo-European word *lobha* which meant "covetousness," and covetousness led to capture. Moreover, *lobha* is a form of the Sanskrit

word *lubh*, to desire. At first marriage was the result of capture and later of purchase. The impetus of early human love is likewise visible in the word "voluptuous" because that word, like *voluptas*, pleasure, means the realization of the effort expressed by the verb *volo*, *I wish* or *I will*. Here, therefore, we reach a simplex of feeling which lies behind all the later complexities of human existence. Our word "covetousness" is a verbal corruption of the Latin word *cupiditas* which meant the "eager desire" characteristic of the god Cupid whose name was linked with another Indo-European word signifying the attraction of sex. We have thus a circular movement since love was covetousness and covetousness was desire and desire was love. This is the enclosed ring of the passion of sex. We are not engaged in an exercise in etymology. We are searching for the meaning of words as a guide to the meaning of facts. We are not dealing with fictions or abstractions but with biological and historical realities. We have gone back to the primeval moment when the purification in manners and in speech had not begun, was not to begin for thousands of years and perhaps, in one sense, can never begin at all. For behind the pretentious façade of civilization



dynamic passions still play. As soon as language is led up to primary facts it becomes tautological; that is to say, it can only repeat the same idea. Let us take another word which has an ugly look in English, the word "lust." In Anglo-Saxon it had merely the meaning of "pleasure," and it retains that meaning in modern German, in Dutch and in the languages of Scandinavia. But, then, it likewise is derived from an early root which meant to desire, and as we have seen desire meant to love and therefore to covet. So that we are back in the magic cycle of the sexes again. Let us not be surprised by this penury of language. It is a sign that we are dealing with fundamental facts and primitive emotions which defy analysis. We have reached physical depths of feeling which the plummet of language cannot sound. We are face to face with the anonymous, impersonal forces of nature. Impersonal? Yes, because although a person is their vehicle the germs of life which that person carries are themselves still impersonal while they struggle towards the creation of a new person. This is the fundamental mystery of being. This is the secret fountain of all life. In spite of what the Malthusians may think this is the passion which has made the cities populous, and which has brought

into existence and will continue to bring the European, the American, the Asiatic, and the African millions. It is the love which finds expression in the boldest of all love songs, the Song of Solomon. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth. I sought him but I found him not. . . . My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven . . . His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold . . . His mouth is most sweet. Yea he is altogether lovely." This is the mood in which the enamoured and impassioned self becomes wholly unconcerned about the shame of tomorrow.<sup>1</sup> It is the magnetic storm of passion. Ages would pass before the answer to the question "What 'tis to love?" could find idealized expression in such lines as these:

It is to be all made of fantasy,  
All made of passion, and all made of wishes;  
All adoration, duty, and observance,  
All humbleness, all patience, all impatience,  
All purity, all trial, all endurance.

<sup>1</sup> In the opinion of the most eminent modern Hebrew scholars *The Song of Solomon* is a dramatic love poem which has no connection with allegory. It was suggested by Robertson Smith that certain passages owing to their "sensuality" should be removed from the text. See Ency. Brit. art. "Canticles".



Now as mankind gradually rose from lower levels a certain refinement took place in feeling, in ideas and in language. Words which originally expressed only rude, physical sensation and desire were retained although no longer fit to represent the more subtle conceptions which had gathered round them. This is especially true of the word "love." Its pedigree of meaning has undergone many transformations in the course of human culture. It seems therefore unreasonable on the part of the psycho-analysts to attribute any but an ideal significance to Saint Paul's use of the word in the famous passage of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." It is claimed that Saint Paul in that passage conceived love in "the amplified sense" discovered by psycho-analysis, but we may be quite certain that the idea had never occurred to him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The word in the Greek text is not *ἔρως*, but *ἀγάπη*. The former had already been identified with passion, the latter with affection. The Agape was also the love feast or common banquet of the early Christians and was the occasion for stimulating brotherhood. There is indeed abundant evidence that those feasts lost their original character, and even became orgiastic. But that was not the fault of Saint Paul, and in any case the fact has nothing to do with his use of the word "love."



In the word love Freud considers that "language has created a perfectly justifiable synthesis of the word's many meanings." But it might be difficult to imagine a more ramshackle synthesis, for as we have seen, the word can be given any signification one chooses. The passage from Corinthians would no doubt be spoiled if the word "affection" were substituted but that is obviously the meaning. We pointed out that affection means applying oneself to another in that other's interest, and this is without doubt the meaning of the term in Christian ethic. It seems grotesque to extend to such an emotion the theory that every affection is only "an expression of the same instinctive movements which impel the sexes to their union." Where affection has entered love has been transformed. The element of personal disturbance has disappeared, and the self is no longer ego-centric. The stage of pure sympathy has been reached and sympathy means "suffering along with" one's fellows. Passion also means "suffering" but it is of a wholly different kind. It is the suffering of restlessness, jealousy and often suspicion. It is the hurricane of feeling. But in affection there is serenity, and the self as an end in itself has been annihilated. That remarkable psychologist Saint

Thomas Aquinas was not afraid to discuss all the aspects of passion, and he describes the human being as actually "dragged" (*trahatur*) by the object of desire. He tells us, moreover, that in order that "a real union" (*unio realis*) may take place there must be an "ingrafting" (*inhaesio*) of the lover with the beloved.<sup>1</sup> But when he makes use of the same terms to describe the higher forms of emotion it would be unfair and unreasonable as well as unseemly to suspect any but spiritual meanings. In like manner the same limitations of language compelled writers such as Saint Augustine, Suarez and Bossuet to make no distinction in the words which they employed to describe sacred and profane love. We may not share their views but we must honour their intentions. Saint Augustine, indeed, had been a disciple in both schools of love, and the "profane" school had been a school for scandal. The blazing sincerity and the dangerous candour of the *Confessions* of the Bishop of Hippo attracted Byron, who said characteristically that the African's somewhat disorderly adolescence rather moved the reader's envy. We could not imagine Aquinas as the author of the *Confessions*. He had probably none to make. He did not

<sup>1</sup> Cum amor faciat amatum in amante et vicissim amantem in amato, oportet mutuum inhaesionem effectum amoris esse.—*S.Th.*, Prima Secundae, XXVIII.a.2.



need to admit that the time was when he had lived only to love and be loved.<sup>1</sup> In a question which reminds the reader of a passage in *Macbeth* Augustine asks where Reason tarries while a sleeper is troubled by dreams of the flesh.<sup>2</sup> Augustine handles the passions as if he were touching explosives, and with the knowledge of one who had experienced their explosion. On the other hand, Aquinas moves more circumspectly, and touches the passions cautiously as if he were unpacking glass. The truth is that when we handle feeling in any of its phases we are handling an enigma.

There is a sense in which all our mental activities are forms of passion. The fact was already well known to Aristotle who pointed out that even the perception of any object outside us is "a sort of suffering or being acted upon."<sup>3</sup> When the mind receives an impression it remains *passive* just in so far as it allows that impression to enter at all. When the receptivity is complete there is, in the case of passion properly so called, an unresisted invasion of the self, and a corresponding diminu-

<sup>1</sup> Et quid erat quod me delectabat nisi amare et amari?—*Confessions*, Bk. III, Chap. 2. Opera Omnia. Migne. Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> Ubi est tunc ratio quae talibus suggestionibus resistit vigilans?—*Ibid.*, Bk. X, Chap. XXX.

<sup>3</sup> *De Anima*, Bk. II. 11. Ed. R. D. Hicks. Cambridge, 1907.

tion of the self's own power and dignity. We cease to be really independent if we are compelled to await the consent of some other being or if we allow ourselves to be hypnotized by any object outside ourselves. But the causes of passion lie also within us as long as our hunger for all kinds of satisfaction remains constant. Only three attitudes are possible towards an object capable of awaking the characteristic of a passion, and that it must be abhorrence. It is clear that indifference can never a passion, (1) indifference, (2) desire and (3) express itself either by eager pursuit or by determined aversion. Just as in the sphere of the understanding we must, unless we remain in continual hesitation, affirm or deny any proposition so in the sphere of the senses we must, unless we remain unmoved, either love or hate. Thus affirmation or denial, love or hate are the only possible alternatives for us when we come into *active* contact with life.

Although there is a dense interbranching of the passions we are able more or less to isolate one from another, and to study their peculiarities apart. The old division into concupiscible and irascible seems unsatisfactory to a modern mind. It was accepted by Aquinas from the Greeks, and



was reaccepted by Bossuet from Aquinas.<sup>1</sup> The rather awkward word "concupiscible" suggests only the passion of sex while "irascible" suggests nothing but the tendency to anger. The main fact concerning the passions is that each of them involves either an advance towards an object in order to possess it or overcome it or a retreat from that object out of loathing or fear. We have only to contrast love and hate, desire and aversion, joy and grief, hope and despair, courage and fear, and we shall immediately understand the truth of the preceding sentence. One passion, anger, stands out from the rest like a free lance of the mind. Every one of those passions creates physical changes such as increase or decrease of the heart's action, the trembling of limbs, the erubescence of anger or its pallor and the pallor of fear. Besides, every passion must end either in joy or sorrow, never in a state of mere indifference. Passion is like the sea which, long after the storm has subsided, still sends its waves rolling to the shore. Moreover, there seems to be a sort of undulation of the passions into each other or a revolving movement among them. Even anger

<sup>1</sup> "De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même."—Chap. VI. Paris Lecoffre, 1900.

becomes merged in savage joy when the object of anger is annihilated, or it becomes savage grief if the task of vengeance has failed. Thus although the passions are the chaos of the self there may be temporary alliances between them. But there are also permanent antagonisms. Hope drives out despair. Joy will have no commerce with sorrow, and courage despises fear. On the other hand, love may be poisoned by fear and jealousy when it is haunted by possible betrayal. Fear is likewise a passion because it is the negative form of expectation, and keeps the mind for ever on the alert. It is the expectation of imminent or of distant danger. And the character of fear is as multiple as the character of hope, fear of one's own failure, fear also of the forces outside the self, forces of nature, forces of man. Although, however, the passions may enter into offensive and defensive alliances—hope and courage, for example—no real synthesis is possible. Many of them are like those beasts of prey that hunt alone. Hate and anger, envy and jealousy and all the lower forms of brutality are essentially voracious. Like cruelty and lust their prevailing characteristic is the desire of seizure, exclusiveness and monopoly. They contain in pronounced form the predatory impulse,



and they are the wreckers of the mental commonwealth. The self in its phase of passion is besieged by forces both from within and from without. Yet at a given moment that self may be a mere fragment of the personality and may be misrepresenting it. Nevertheless, its commitments and its surrender undertaken in the fleeting instant may compromise its entire future. A misplaced love or a misplaced fear may ruin a life. A king and emperor abandons an imperial throne because of an amorous obsession. If, like Bain, we divide psychic factors into those which are elemental and those which were derived in the course of evolution the human self is surrounded by a swarm of impulses which are constantly directing or misdirecting conduct. Throned above all the passions there appears in some form or other the desire of possession, and it reigns in civilized as well as in savage life. It is this passion which, to the physical plunder in nature, added psychic plunder in the world of man. It may be true, as Aquinas hoped, that no human being ever loves what is evil except under the notion that it is good.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, as an agent of "the darker passions," as Hume

<sup>1</sup> *Malum nunquam amatur nisi sub ratione boni.*—*S. Th.*, I. II. QU XXVII.a.1.

called them, man has often resembled the destroying forces of nature like poison or lightning.

Although passion may call forth the greatest display of energy of which we are capable—the energy of anger or of courage or of hope—it is an energy which is intermittent. It is often only effervescent and therefore evanescent. It burns, as in the case of desire, only to burn away unless fresh fuel be constantly added. There is also the paradoxical fact that rapid exhaustion is caused both by a passion unsatisfied as well as satisfied, and this is true even of the more attenuated passions due to the action of civilized life, such as personal ambition or avarice or malignity. We have drawn attention to the fact that the civilized self is a superstructure erected on the underself of instinct and appetite so that two sets of claims make themselves felt in every civilized individual. In nature everything remains untamed, and the law of existence is the law of battle. But the civilized person is likewise engaged with others of his kind in a new contest devised by intellect and cunning. Each attempts to hold his or her place in the civilized scheme, and special passions are engendered in the struggle. For the artificial self must continue to fight for its own interests just like



the original or aboriginal natural self which can neither be supplanted nor suppressed. On the contrary, the civilized being becomes the slave of the humbler organism which remains a thing of rude appetites and desires. All the advantages discovered by civilized society form the new means whereby the animal self continues to be fed. Instead of killing his rival in a dispute over some booty of the chase the representative of civilization kills him by a transaction on the Stock Exchange. By superior skill in financial or commercial intrigue and by the passion for gain he is able to keep his footing in the world. And by such means he not only pampers the artificial self but actually preserves the primitive being of hunger and thirst who remains concealed beneath modern clothes. Take the case of Macaulay. In his writing of history and in his pronouncements on historical characters he adopted a high moral tone. But while his *History of England* was in course of publication he made a note in his diary that he had discovered "another mistake," and added that he hoped no one would see it. His desire for truth and historical accuracy stopped, then, as soon as his own renown was at stake? It was the artificial self that was in danger. Let us glance at Hobbes.

He was an ardent royalist, which is not surprising since he had been the tutor of the exiled King. But as soon as it seemed that the Commonwealth was firmly established, Hobbes who had also been in exile returned in order to protect his own interest, and his passion for royalty gave way to a passion for the republic. When, however, Cromwell disappeared, Hobbes became a royalist again at the Restoration, and no doubt like Pepys he "put buckles on his shoes that day." It is not surprising that Charles II as he passed through the streets of London amid the acclaiming multitude cynically remarked that he had not known that he had possessed so many friends. The ethic of opportunism which is the ethic of unstable principles appears to be the most stable of all forms of ethics. It is a system which makes it clear that human conduct is invariably governed by feeling or passion. Machiavelli and Talleyrand also afford good examples of the human self as an adroit quick change actor and scene shifter. Machiavelli had been Soderini's right hand helper, but when the Gonfaloniere and the Signoria fell and the Republic with them Machiavelli turned to the Medici, who were the Republic's enemies, and sought to dedicate "The Prince" to one of



them. Talleyrand had sworn allegiance to so many governments, and possessed such an extraordinary *flair* for coming changes that Napoleon said he would like to hang him up on the wall as an unerring political barometer. And when Talleyrand criminally sold some of Napoleon's State Papers which were national property it was the civilized self which acted as plunderer. Sometimes the individual finds it necessary to face the urgent and contradictory passions of the underself and the upperself at one and the same time. Nelson with a naval campaign on his hands wastes time at Naples because he has an overpowering passion for Lady Hamilton, which conflicts with his passion for the sea. Sainte Beuve, who appeared to be a tranquil man of letters, engaged in austere labour, makes Victor Hugo's wife his own mistress, and while outwardly appearing to be still the husband's friend attacks him in a foreign newspaper, signs the articles under a fictitious name and receives payment for them. So that the artificial self has its own peculiar passions and "poisons." Any one who has watched even a small part of modern intrigue must have noticed the signs of that inner torment which the superficial passions of civilized life involve. I do not think that Des-



cartes was justified in placing effrontery, mockery and impudence among the passions. They belong to the more trivial exhibitions of the self. But the passion of ambition can cause the intensest joy or the intensest misery. I got a glimpse of Sir William Harcourt shortly after he had failed to gain the leadership of the Liberal Party. Lord Rosebery had been preferred, and the fact meant that Harcourt had lost the premiership. His face, like a mirror, reflected the deep bitterness of disappointment. A passion of ambition, in itself, perfectly legitimate, had retired within itself baffled and humiliated, and in such cases the human face by its relaxed and dismantled appearance betrays complete disillusion. There are those who come away from dinner parties and banquets with heartburning as well as heartburn, and doubtless they would rather endure the physical than the spiritual variety. We might be surprised by the intensity of the sufferings which accumulate under the jewels and brocade and the gala uniforms of all those who are engaged in climbing the social tree with the agility of their arboreal ancestors. The chase after honours and decorations, medals, ribbons, stars and garters and all the millinery of the great masked entertainment

of the world's vanity is a reproduction in civilized life of that rage for ornamentation which characterizes savage and barbaric peoples. It will always be the ambition of certain human beings to come back adorned like prize cattle from the cattle show with the ribbons of their prizes fastened on them. But these are puppet passions. We are concerned with those more massive movements of feeling which betray the pagan foundations of human life and which never vary from race to race. The foundations of feeling have not altered from prehistoric ages down to our own day. Civilizations come and go, religions, codes of morals and of law change or grow obsolete, one superstructure after another may be built on the primitive basis of life and may attempt to conceal it, but the basis itself remains unmoved.

Because they are spasmodic and sporadic the passions, as we have seen, never form any real unity. They remain more or less independent. Nevertheless, two of them—hope and fear—accompany as emotions every operation of the human mind. In fact, they link themselves alternately to each single passion. Hope and fear play so large a part in human happiness or misery that we must make a brief examination of them. They



dominate the life of every conscious organism, and even the animals hope and fear. Birds, for instance, long after their parental instinct is exhausted continue to build nests, and the fact has a touch of pathos. In like manner human beings late in life and often childless build houses and furnish them as if forgetting that although we may make abodes there is no abiding. But the eyes of the old as well as of the young are fixed not on the present but always on the future. Some form of expectation, indeed, is the tractor or propeller which makes our continuance possible and gives meaning to our lives. Hope is invariably the dynamic factor of advance. All of us give hostages to hazard, and even the weakest and the most timid take some poor risk every day. And the sowing of seed even in a meagre soil is the most primitive and perhaps the most beautiful of all the acts of hope. In making provision for ourselves, however, we unconsciously make provision for successors known or unknown. Birds build nests which are later occupied by rats or beetles. We construct houses in which other people will live, chairs on which other people will sit, tables to accommodate other guests at other banquets, and beds for other sleepers. To-day we



are using roads which the Romans made, and we in turn are constructing roads over which traffic will roll a thousand years hence. So that each generation has only the usufruct of its own property. In this need of looking ahead in the interests either of the individual or of the mass lies the entire significance of human labour, and without the instinct of hope the world's fortunes would collapse. Even the poorest and obscurest human being whose radius of action is limited to a painful effort to satisfy the humblest wants feels the quickening of this strange power which dwells within us and helps us to brave the future. In the middle of any crisis we say—"It can't last." Is the storm at its height? But look! The glass is even already rising. Has the bright day disappeared in darkness? But the dawn always comes back, and sunset is only the prelude to sunrise. Hope, indeed, is the busiest of all builders content often with the humblest materials, and continuing to build even when the foundations may be trembling.

But we have another companion lurking in the background. If hope goes in advance, and calls us forwards, fear draws us back. They are twins, and like other twins they are often quarrelling.

They are engaged in thwarting each other, and they pass in and out of the mind as through a swing door. The element of anxiety, never wholly quiescent, makes itself felt even in our petty embarrassments from the loss of a jewel to the loss of a fortune or a friend or a reputation. Certain people suffer tremor at the prospect of missing a train or a tram. Our minds are inwardly dramatized from the beginning. Should I do this or that? Shall I take the plunge? Or is the risk too great? According as the one or the other impulse predominates the individual will be a risk taker or an avoider of risks. Quite early we become aware that there are two struggles—the interior and the exterior—the struggle within ourselves and the struggle with our surroundings. The first glance of terror visible in the eyes of a child is the signal of the existence already of a mental condition which will recur again and again as he grows older. Having entered the human scene he becomes almost at once aware that it may be a scene of danger. His horror of the dark and of loneliness, of strange faces and angry voices, of hands lifted in the gesture of punishment indicates that the first fears are physical. They are a lingering atavism, racial memories of dark and



evil forests, dim caverns, the sudden appearance at the mouth of the cave of a wild beast or a human enemy, the alarms and tocsins of the primeval night. But as the human being moves farther within the labyrinth of existence fears become moral and spiritual, and, as the history of religion shows, may give birth to monstrous shapes. In human relationships fear may assume innumerable masks and disguises in the collision of interests and wills. So that if the physical self is not in danger the moral self may be as the complications of life increase. Between the first sound of the baby's rattle and the last sound of the death rattle the human mind is a secret dramatic centre, and although the stage is infinitely small it is infinitely crowded. But the chief actors are hope and fear.

It is the thinker's task not only to discover causes but if possible to reduce their number since certain apparent causes are often only the effects of others. What, then, is the cause of passion? Most writers, ancient, medieval and modern, have contented themselves with drawing up more or less complete lists of the emotional disturbances which assail the mind. No one has explained the reason of the variety and intensity of those



disturbances. Descartes, indeed, in his somewhat meagre and frigid treatise on *The Passions of the Soul*—in which, by the way, he embezzles other people's ideas—naïvely informs us that those passions are caused by the “animal spirits” which invade the pineal gland where the soul resides, and that the animal spirits are “a kind of subtle air.” It is also surprising that he should have considered admiration to be the chief passion.<sup>1</sup> But admiration is scarcely a passion at all. At most it prepares the way for the rise of passion, the passion of love, for example, but can never be identified with it. Spinoza, who made a far deeper study of the emotional content of the mind, believed that any passion is the result of an “inadequate idea.” In so far as we possess adequate ideas we are active and impose ourselves on the surrounding world, but when we have only inadequate ideas we are acted upon and remain passive.<sup>2</sup> We cannot accept such an abstract origin for the movements of impulse. The discovery of any idea which may be implied in an impulse comes later than the impulse. As we shall see, all the great

<sup>1</sup> “La première de toutes les passions.”—Article LIII, *Les Passions de l'Ame*. Gallimard. Paris.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, Part III. Prop. I.

impulses come from another source far closer to life. Both in the origin and development of the impulses it is feeling more or less intense which is dominant so that the cause lies below the region of ideas. Besides, when an idea lies behind a passion that idea is always adequate for the end immediately in view. This may be easily seen, for instance, in the case of anger or courage where the "idea" implied is the annihilation of the object intervening between the mind and its desire. In these cases no other idea would be adequate. And in the case of love the idea in the lover's mind is always "adequate" as an expression of *his* enjoyment. No. The great passions which shake the character to its base have their origin in the underself; in other words they have physical roots. We have to seek for them in the obscure underworld of organic existence. The two main movements of human emotion are attraction and repulsion, and they betray the peculiarities of all the passions known to us. Thus hope advances towards the object while fear withdraws fighting at most a rear guard action. Courage is attracted by the danger which is imminent for the purpose of overcoming it, but despair is repelled, and retires in impotence. Love is drawn like a thing



magnetized by its magnet, while hate, if it does not ally itself with anger for purposes of destruction, falls back in loathing and horror. Joy is expansive and ebullient, eager to take wings to communicate to others the news of its delight, but sorrow sits fast like a wounded bird with wings folded. Yet this picture of the two main movements is not sufficient. The final question must be: what is their inward cause? Here it is necessary to choose a single formula, and I venture to think that it can be found in a fact which manifests itself wherever there is a sign of life. That fact is irritation in its biological or scientific sense. Irritation is the response to a stimulus. For the moment let us lay aside and forget the commoner use of the word "irritability" which means bad temper. That there is an irascible element widely distributed in nature is obvious to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. It may be noticed in the flash of a tiger's eye or heard in the lion's roar, it betrays itself in human gesture and in the tone of the voice. But its significance lies deeper than in the restiveness of individual beings. Irritability is universal throughout nature for it appears in the inorganic as well as in the organic world. It is displayed by metals as well



as by muscles, and it is also the characteristic of plants. Seeds placed in the soil immediately become active because they are in direct contact with mineral elements, and as soon as a plant sprouts from the ground new irritants begin to play upon it in the form of air, rain, sun, and the action of insect life. A plant placed in a vacuum or even in a cellar, that is to say, in a medium devoid of the necessary irritant factors, sooner or later dies. Irritation is actually an elixir of life. Irritation means incitement or provocation, and provocation means calling forth. The powers and qualities of a substance are chemically called out by contact with other substances, and by electric or radio active currents and by heat. But irritants may act on an organism not only from without but from within, and every organism contains its own natural irritants. Hunger, thirst and sex are the three main forms of natural irritants, and their action is irresistible. The moment arrives when the organism needs relief, and sex passion, for instance, demands to be its own purge and cleanser. There is a remarkable passage in Aristotle where he says that touch is the one sense that the animal cannot do without, that while the higher senses are necessary to well-being touch is necessary to mere

being. We may go a little farther than Aristotle in order to point out that in the passion of love nature brings every creature back to this most primitive and fundamental of all the senses. For touch is the dumb alphabet of love. We require a philosophy of the roots of things, but if there is to be such a philosophy we must actually examine the roots, and not trifle and dally with the superficial appearances.

If, then, we admit the truth that irritability is the primary characteristic of living matter in its highest as well as in its humblest manifestations it becomes easy to account for human passion. There is not a single emotion however subtle and refined which cannot be explained as the result of some form of incitement and provocation. For excitement is the natural effect of incitement. Anger, for example, may have a physical or a moral origin, but in both cases it is the effect of intense irritation caused by physical or moral injury or by real or imagined offence. The physical changes which accompany all the deeper passions are a proof of the violent character of the irritations from which they spring. Even the negative forms of passion—grief, dejection, aversion, antipathy and despair—owe their origin and continuance



to causes similar to those which lie beneath the commotion of the more dynamic elements of the living being. The reader will remember that we attempted to explain all emotional manifestations as an expression of hope and fear which seem to share a sort of dual monarchy in the mind. But since desire appears active in both of them—in hope because we long for the possession of some good and in fear because we seek to be saved from some evil—it is in the passion of desire that all other passions centre. But desire implies irritation caused by some want. So that the schemes and schedules drawn up by ancient, medieval and modern thinkers illustrate the variations of a single passion. Now the original meaning of the word desire is romantic. Its root is the same as the root of the Latin word for a star, *sidus*, and that root also appears in our word “consider.” For while *considerare*, to consider, meant to contemplate the stars and to turn the eyes towards them, *desiderare*, to desire, meant to turn the eyes away from the stars, that is, to regret them, feel the want of them. But regret always ends in some form of longing, and desire is longing. So that it is out of longing that all the passions spring.





CHAPTER III

THE CONTROL OF THE PASSIONS

24th Nov 1895  
Woolley's Lane



*re read.*

### CHAPTER III

## THE CONTROL OF THE PASSIONS

**W**HEN there is a moral collapse moralists are always willing to hasten to the scene of the disaster like a break-down gang. They have excellent intentions when they offer moral maxims for the purpose of mending the broken machinery of character. But advice, admonition and reprimand never quelled a passion. The moralists should make an effort to get nearer the dynamics of nature. If they penetrate beneath all the upholstery of modern civilization they will discover two hungry sexes. There are only two ways of extinguishing a passion. Either you must allow it to extinguish itself or you must replace it by another passion of a nobler sort. I hope to show in this chapter that the moral ideal is also an affair of feeling. The duel between passion and reason is like a duel between fire and ice, and it is the ice that disappears. In the life of feeling it is

only feeling that counts. Cold reason is admirable and is a sovereign power in its own sphere. But its frozen syllogisms must wait their turn until the incandescence of a passion has burned itself out. Undoubtedly two equal quantities of cold water and hot water neutralize each other, and the result is water that is on the cooler side of tepid. In the case of hostile moral temperatures, however, such as passion and reason, no such simple effects can be obtained. The full extinction of a passion depends on its own waste of fuel. Otherwise like a slumbering fire it may burst forth again and destroy the house. The volcano sleeps and wakes, wakes and sleeps, and no one can predict the rising of its burning floor. There are things in nature—and passion is one of them—that refuse to moulder, and only smoulder.

Spinoza counted some fifty human passions, and this number lets us see the kind of task which faces the self when it decides to be its own policeman. For it must never permit any other person to be its policeman; it must frame its own moral rules and regulations in order to reach a stage of inner evolution at which it would consider even moral advice to be a form of impudence. What,



then, must the individual do when he discovers that the rebel forces called the passions with which nature has endowed him have become inconvenient not only to his fellow creatures but to himself? This is the moral problem. After long search for a doctrine which I could willingly and honestly accept I made a discovery as the result of personal experience. Hume advises us to reject every system of ethics however subtle and ingenious which is not founded on fact and observation. Therefore, I make no apology for introducing what I am about to narrate. As an officer, a mere lieutenant in the British army during the war, I was engaged in the entrainment of troops at Abbeville on the Somme. The town had become a great British camp. It was the intention of the German Staff to destroy the railway system which had Abbeville as its centre. We were frequently bombarded from the air especially during the night. All the civil traffic had been diverted to the coast, and the civilian population had evacuated the town. Late one evening a long troop train crowded with our men was drawn up opposite the hut in which I carried out my functions. Two Australian soldiers entered the hut. They had just been discharged from the Australian

Love in Tokyo.



Hospital in Abbeville, and they had been given orders to travel in the train which was waiting. News had come that a German bombardment was imminent as their bombing planes had been signalled. In such circumstances it was always necessary to clear the station of every train, otherwise hundreds of men might be killed. The two Australians refused to enter the trucks, and declared that since they had just come out of hospital they should be allowed to travel in better conditions. The trucks used for transport were cattle trucks, there were no seats, and they generally contained between thirty and forty men. I told the Australians to hand me their papers, in which I found it stated that the bearers were fit and due to rejoin their regiment. They still refused, however, to enter the train, and one of them remarked that they were not cattle. The Australians were among the finest soldiers in the army and displayed magnificent fighting qualities. But they had their own ideas of discipline, and showed more independence than our own men. I knew that it would be not only out of place but also useless to argue with the two convalescents. The usual procedure would have been to hand them over, because of their insubordination, to the

military police. This I decided not to do. But time was pressing. The train should have already cleared the station. No British train, however, could start without a written permission from the officer on duty. My French colleague, the Commissaire, arrived to say that the train was blocking the line, that a bombardment was imminent, and that before it began the French troop train immediately in the rear of our own should be allowed to leave within the next instant. I at once filled up the official schedule which we called a *peut partir*, and I handed it to the French officer. I then turned to the Australians and asked them again if they still refused to enter the train. They said yes.

“But your pals are waiting for you up the line.”

The effect was immediate. The two faces which had been sullen and rigid suddenly relaxed, and I noticed in both cases a slight parting of the lips accompanied by a curious change in the expression of the eyes.

“That’s done it,” said one of the men.

I shook hands with them, and they boarded their truck as the train was moving.

Now what had happened in this case? A feeling



of self-pity and a passion of anger had been instantly displaced by a feeling of comradeship and the passion of honour. The movement was utterly spontaneous. It was not the result of reasoning or calculation, and there had been no time to debate even the problem of duty. An anxiety for their own self respect, a kind of pride had seized both men, and what had seemed impossible for them to do became in a moment pleasurable and easy. They had decided to act nobly as soon as it was suggested to them that their own comrades were in need of them farther up the line. Now as a student I had read Plato and Aristotle, and I remembered that in their theory of morals the good and the beautiful form a unity. But it was only when my Australians solved their dilemma both for themselves and for me in the manner I have described that I realized to the full that the highest conduct is an aesthetic revelation. I became convinced that an action must be right when it is beautiful, and I troubled myself no more about "methods of ethics." The quarrels between Stoics and Hedonists, Intuitionists and Utilitarians interested me no more. I felt that Hume was a true guide when he said that "approbation or blame is not the work of the



judgement but of the heart.”<sup>1</sup> Those Australians acted morally not because they were urged by some abstract theory of duty or by an order emanating from the man who, for the moment, was their superior officer, but by an emotion impelling them to do the exact opposite of what they had at first decided to do. “It is requisite,” said Hume, “that there should be some sentiment which virtue touches, some internal taste or feeling, or whatever you may please to call it, which distinguishes moral good and evil, and which embraces the one and rejects the other.”<sup>2</sup> This passage was obviously influenced by the first English writer who demanded an aesthetic foundation for morality—“the elegant Lord Shaftesbury,” as Hume called him. I object, however, to the use of the word “taste.” For if conduct is only an affair of taste then since there can be no dispute about tastes there could be nothing but a chaos of behaviour as well as of opinion. Taste implies what is merely pleasant, whereas conduct that is beautiful may involve sacrifice, and sacrifice is

<sup>1</sup> *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, p. 131. *Bibliotheca Philosophorum*, vol. viii. Leipzig, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> *Inquiry*, p. 135.

often painful. Besides, the merely pleasant is trivial and fleeting, but an example of beautiful conduct has both value and duration. The main point to seize is that the fact that an act happens to be conformable with reason and duty is a discovery after the act has taken place. If we examine the conduct of a man who has acted "with a high sense of duty" we shall invariably find that his own decency and dignity formed the motive. Therefore, the origin of good and evil should no longer trouble us. It lies with human feeling which has grown wiser to decide on what is good and what is bad, the bad being ugly and the good being beautiful. Reason and logic, codes of ethics and codes of law can never supply or supplant the voluntary impulse to act which rises out of the emotions. If your emotions happen to be vile all the worse for yourself and your neighbours. But if an act is good because it is lovely the whole series of "Thou Shalt Nots" with the threat of vengeance behind them ceases to have any moral value. They are the result of pressure from without, are no better than police regulations; and this is an insult. The mere submission to another's will, divine or human, is morally worthless, and has value only for the herd. If



“Thou shalt not” is to possess any ethical value the human being must pronounce it to himself. If a will foreign to my own commands me to do something, and I do it out of fear or even out of hope I am merely a slave. If it is out of feeling, which is always preponderant in intention, that moral and immoral actions arise it is also by feeling that they are judged. In a murder trial the warning of the judge to the jury that they must condemn if they are convinced of the prisoner’s guilt implies that the feeling of mankind is in such a case the final tribunal. It is to the special horror of the crime that the prosecuting counsel points when he demands a verdict of guilty, but the counsel for the defence reminds that same jury that if they condemn an innocent man to death and the truth of his innocence is discovered too late their own feelings and those of the public will be outraged.

It has been denied that a genuine moral decision can ever be based on considerations connected with the beauty or the ugliness of an action. Brentano, for instance, said that a moral preference is always far more “inward” than any appreciation of the attractiveness of fine conduct could ever be. He demanded “a sure inward sense of rightness”



which compels a human being to choose one form of action as moral and reject another as immoral.<sup>1</sup> We have just seen, however, that a mere appeal to comradeship was capable of creating an inward sense of rightness. A sudden feeling of the need of chivalrous behaviour was sufficient to cause two men to sacrifice their comfort. An aesthetic motive did what neither reason nor authority nor the sense of bare duty could do. It is not in abstract principles devised by philosophers, who seldom watch closely enough the passions of life, that we should expect to be able to discover the motives of human action. Every contact however trivial with one's fellow men affords insight into the workings of their minds. And although the following incident may appear slightly comic as well as trivial it will reveal the nature of the difference between good and evil. I spent a summer at Avranches, and after having suffered from toothache during ten days I asked the hotel keeper if he could recommend a good dentist to me. He paused for a moment, and then said that of the two dentists at Avranches one happened to be his bitter personal enemy, but that since he was by far the more skilful practitioner he advised me

<sup>1</sup> *Vom Ursprung Sittlicher Erkenntnis*, p. 13. Leipzig, 1934.

to go to him. I informed the dentist that it was M. Pinot, proprietor of the Hôtel de France, who had sent me to him. The dentist laid down his tools, and with a look of incredulity exclaimed—"Vraiment!" Next day I was in the café of the hotel, and was expressing to the owner my satisfaction with the dentist's work when the man himself entered. He immediately walked up to his former enemy and shook hands. The reconciliation took place with characteristic French effusiveness so that my raging tooth had been the cause of the cessation of rage between two men. This somewhat farcical incident contains nevertheless the secret of the highest kind of human conduct. I feel perfectly certain that it would have pleased Plato and Aristotle, Shaftesbury, Herbart and Hume. When I congratulated M. Pinot on his action he replied—"Mon honneur était en jeu." Thus a modest hotel keeper had solved at a stroke the entire problem of good and evil, and had unconsciously acted in accordance with Kant's categorical imperative—"Act in such a manner that the principle underlying your action could be made a universal rule." Brentano compares the spontaneous acceptance of what is morally right with the spontaneous acceptance of a statement .



whose opposite is unthinkable or absurd. Thus every person knows that a round square is impossible and absurd, and in the same way every one sees at a glance the need of rejecting what is flagrantly bad. But is it true? At what stage of human evolution did this power of moral insight begin to reveal itself? The doctrine is in contradiction with Brentano's own theory. He denies the existence of inborn principles, and proclaims that he belongs to the empirical school. He calls Kant's categorical imperative "an evident fiction." He asks, "How do we know what is good?" and he answers that the matter is very simple. Of the two antagonistic moral attitudes—love and hate—one but only one at a given moment is right and the other wrong. His view is that the test of moral as of intellectual truth consists in the impossibility of believing the opposite. There are propositions which it would be ridiculous to deny as, for instance, that a triangle has three sides. So that just as we take a natural pleasure in clear insight into things we have likewise a natural pleasure in the good. This is what Brentano means by "the natural sanction for moral conduct" which was the original title of the famous lecture which he delivered to the Juridical Society of Vienna in



1889. He accepts the ancient Greek view that all men are naturally desirous of knowledge, although this seems to be doubtful, and he extends this principle into the sphere of morals. He thinks that it is just as natural to distinguish the good from the bad as to distinguish the true from the false. "We name that object good when the love which it inspires is the right kind of love."<sup>1</sup> But whom are we to understand by "we?" All mankind? There are many civilized people who are either wholly unprovided or only meagrely provided with this insight. And what must have been the condition of prehistoric man? It is quite possible that prehistoric man noticed that any statement concerning the possibility of a round square would be absurd, but did he immediately recognize "the right kind of love" or the need of justice? The truth seems to be that the "natural sanction for moral conduct" is the result of a long and painful evolution. Obviously, of course, the same kind of evolution was necessary before the distinction between beauty and ugliness in behaviour began to be visible. The cannibal was as devoid of a sense of seemliness as he was devoid

<sup>1</sup> "Wir nennen etwas gut wenn die darauf bezügliche Liebe richtig ist."—Op. cit., p. 19.

of an inward sense of rightness. Those thinkers whom Brentano calls "philosophers of the feelings" were aware that the demand for an aesthetic of conduct is the result of a gradual process of refinement. What they believed was that all the claims of "rightness" and all the demands of justice are guaranteed and only guaranteed by action which is beautiful. In a given case the problem of right and wrong may be very complicated. Should, for example, a man who has a wife and family dependent on him risk his life in the attempt to save another man who is drowning? If on account of his dilemma he stands hesitating on the shore until it is too late many people might not blame him. It is a question of casuistry. But if, on the other hand, obeying immediately the heroic impulse he plunges in and loses his own life his act would be considered as beautiful even by those who deplored it. In such a case the moral act is self evidently right because it satisfies the aesthetic ideal. When we are told that the choice of moral action is made not for aesthetic but for moral reasons we seem to be moving in a tautological circle.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Brentano's re-

<sup>1</sup> "Nein, der eigentlich logische Vorzug ist kein Vorzug ästhetischer Erscheinung, sondern eine gewisse innere Richtigkeit, welche dann einen gewissen Vorzug der Erscheinung mit sich führt."—Op. cit., p. 13.



markable and convincing theory of the identity of feeling and will seems to come into serious conflict with his theory of the immediate recognition of right and wrong. I have a sense of depression—I desire an object which I do not possess—I begin to hope that I may be able to secure it—I now long for it eagerly—I decide to seize it—I resolve finally on action. Here the act of volition is the inevitable culmination of a series of feelings. The intermediate stages make the transition almost imperceptible, for the germ of volition already exists when the movement begins. It is like the movement of a wave swamping the mind, and the action of the will takes place at the moment when the wave spends its full force sweeping away all obstacles. This is Brentano's identification of feeling and volition as being two phases of a single process. But the feeling moves irresistibly towards the desired object. Can it stop its momentum in order to be able to pronounce a judgement on "the inward rightness" of the choice about to be made? An adolescent may possess feelings of an irrepressible kind. He demands satisfaction, but he is still a novice standing on the threshold of experience. (How is he to know what to choose unless he already knows what to avoid?) What



does he know about "the right kind of love?" All is experiment. Those who choose the safe path are indebted to those who, having chosen the path that is not safe, made clear to all whom it might concern the disastrous character of the journey. There is no flying leap towards the good or even towards the bad. It is only after we have experienced both that we know them just as we know the true because we have known the false or the false because we have known the true. This is the irremovable paradox of our existence. Brentano's was the most brilliant attempt ever made to discover the psychological elements of a moral decision. The aim was not to propound a moral theory but simply to show that there are self-evident truths in ethics as well as in science. But it all seems to depend on the stage of self education which the individual has reached, and the creation of the human self, as we have more than once pointed out, has been irregular and intermittent. What is obvious to us in ordinary knowledge and conduct was unknown to primitive mankind. What gives us pain would have given them pleasure, for although the fundamental instincts remain the same the civilized self has submitted to its own discipline as well as to the reciprocal

discipline of social contact. If, as many important thinkers including Brentano himself believe, there are no inborn moral principles, if a law of nature and a law of nations instructing mankind in the ways of reason and justice are both fictions, and if the earliest political institutions and ordinances had no ethical intention whatever but were merely the expression of statecraft backed by superior power, where are we to look for the origin of "a sure inward sense of rightness?" Obviously we must look for it in the slow process of adjustment of human will to human will among beings who had recognized the advantages of co-operation and union. If, as Spinoza said, the good or what we imagine to be good is what causes us joy, and evil or what we imagine to be evil is what causes us sorrow, then each individual must be the judge of his own case until he gathers sufficient experience.<sup>1</sup> How is the novice in drinking to know that the next glass will make him drunk? His chief desire is to feel gay himself and to contribute to the gaiety of the evening. I was a pupil in a French school in Switzerland. At the Christmas

<sup>1</sup> "Per bonum hic intelligo omne genus laetitiae."—*Ethica* III, Prop. 39. "Id malum vocamus quod causa est tristitiae hoc est quod nostram agendi potentiam minuit vel coercet."—*Ibid.*, IV, Prop. 30.



dinner a most respected member of the teaching staff, who was wholly unaddicted to drink and lived a most abstemious life, drank too much, and to the infinite amusement of the school boys began to gesticulate wildly, and he even became uncontrollable. The episode lost him his post and he drifted into poverty. But he had been merely experimenting in a form of the *genus laetitiae*, and he had been at the moment unable by intuition to distinguish Brentano's "right kind of pleasure" from the wrong kind. Ripeness is all. But we might add that decency is all. If beauty is the essence of "rightness" in all human relations, as we believe it to be, then it is also the essence of the moral act. Such a view of conduct brings us into unison with the moral doctrine of the two greatest thinkers of ancient Greece. A series of merely correct and legal relations between human beings would render the social contract as dull as a commercial treaty. A moral or a legal code is merely a skeleton, and what gives a skeleton meaning is the warm flesh that once clothed it. When we wish to describe moral action at its best and highest we say that the individual who displays it is moved by "moral passion." The phrase is significant. It means that morality too is a phase



of feeling. We hope to show in the last chapter that the aesthetic demand is the deepest of all demands, and that it and it alone makes human life worth living. For without its satisfaction in the sphere of morals and, as we shall also show, in the sphere of religion the human scene is only a dreary waste.

In a letter to Innocent XI Bossuet gives an account of his method of educating the Dauphin, and he says that he is teaching the Prince that (in order to become a perfect philosopher (*pour devenir parfait philosophe*) a man need study only himself.) It is perhaps not altogether easy to share the great bishop's optimism. A Roman poet said that no man dares to descend into himself. No one has the courage to sound his own depths. We noticed in the first chapter, however, that there is not one self but that there are several selves. Besides, at any given moment the self is merely a fragment which has come to the surface of consciousness, and may even be misrepresenting the remainder. Yet that transitional and fugitive self may form judgements which may have to be abandoned later as erroneous, and may accept commitments liable to wreck the entire character as life proceeds. If our sole instrument of knowledge is itself un-

known and unknowable it is hard to see how we can find a guarantee of truth at all. All that we can really call our own and cling to is a state of feeling, but no state of feeling is permanent. In Islamic theology two angels, Munkar and Nakir, question all the dead in their graves. But if the dead go down with a manifold self within them those angels have been given a formidable task. Saint Teresa of Spain was less optimistic than Bossuet, and we rather agree with her when she says that it is no small matter of vexation and confusion that we do not know who we are.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the word "revelation" is drawing back a veil, and we have encountered some difficulty in drawing back the veil that hides the self. Like certain oriental idols which exercise their power because they remain invisible shrouded in dim temples, the self in each of its phases becomes an idol to its owner while it sits unseen within the folds of consciousness. No doubt there are those who are able to see through everybody except through themselves, and at least our moral judgements concerning other people are apparently made with the utmost ease. When, however, we attempt

<sup>1</sup> "No es pequeña lastima y confusion, que por nuestra culpa, no entendamos a nosotros mismos, ni sepamos quien somos."—*Castillo Interior*, p. 36. Barcelona, 1917.



any scientific or philosophic explanation of the conscious self we find the task hopeless, and every definition moves in an idle circle. We must accept the fact that the individual is like the captain of a ship who must navigate it although he has no technical knowledge of the engines which make the vessel move. And at least every one is or ought to be intensely interested in successful navigation. Moreover, we are not without some kind of chart and compass. There are, besides, some remarkable inner disclosures of the kind of combat in which we are engaged. That combat is double. It has to do with inner forces such as the passions at which we have already glanced, and it has to do with the forces which break in upon us from the world outside. Now it is remarkable that a set of special adjectives have attached themselves like crustaceans to the word "self." There is a series of composite words in each of which the self occupies the first place, and they reveal a peculiar situation. Each of them appears to imply some kind of moral crisis in which the human personality may be involved. It will be noticed in the following list that certain of those combinations presuppose and envelop each other. We shall leave them as they are, however, because this



accumulation of adjectives concerning the self should only convince us of the importance of such self-description. In any case, it is better to forsake the region of abstract speculation and theory in order to listen to the movement and clamour of life. Any dictionary can supply a number of terms in which the human individual appears in two contradictory phases, and it may be useful to draw up a double column of such contrasts. The most striking are perhaps as follows:—

Selfish	Unselfish
Self-love	Self-sacrifice
Self-indulgence	Self-denial
Self-praise	Self-abasement
Self-conceit	Self-contempt
Self-advertisement	Self-effacement
Self-importance	Self-humiliation
Self-assertion	Self-repression
Self-preservation	Self-destruction
Self-betrayal	Self-concealment
Self-laxity	Self-discipline
Self-deception	Self-criticism
Self-accusation	Self-righteousness
Self-yielding	Self-mastery
Self-satisfaction	Self-reproach
Self-regarding	Self-forgetful
Self-surrender	Self-defence
Self-distrust	Self-confidence

This schedule of qualities and defects could no doubt be varied and enlarged, but even as it stands it seems to gather up the history of the human being in his laborious effort to educate himself in moral relations. It will be noticed that the contrasted positions point to a simultaneous struggle against the world without as well as against the world within. The list, in fact, forms a kind of autobiography of the self. While the more bellicose qualities like self-assertion, self-confidence and self-advancement involve a combat with mankind, other terms such as self-reproach, self-mastery, self-distrust and self-accusation characterize the inward war which never ceases. We have here a sort of double looking glass in which the human being may watch his changes and disguises. Or it is like a window by means of which you can gaze outwards on the street or inwards on the room. The self is always a double reflector since it is aware of its own existence only because it is aware also of the scene outside. We found that our lives are inwardly dramatized from the beginning, and the self's own self-description is a demonstration of the fact. It is with the qualities and manœuvres, the strategy and tactics implied in the suggested list that all moral theories have been busy, and



it is on account of them too that all codes of ethics and of law have been framed. All possible human virtues and vices arise out of some such permutations and combinations of the self. These are the varying key positions which it takes up in its attitude towards life. The self must be either victor or victim. Its qualities and its defects are so many states of health or states of disease. But what of the remedies? Obviously they must be won from experience. We have seen that if the control comes merely from the outside no real moral situation is created. In that case the individual is nothing but a tool in the hands of an alien power. Those who are content to accept moral dictation are like dogs that are made to carry in their mouths the whip which will afterwards chastise them. This is slavery. No order from without, however admirable it may be, can create a genuine inner transformation unless it expresses the individual's own feeling, and when it does express that feeling it becomes superfluous. The behests which intimidate the self are at most like those ventilating fans which agitate air already vitiated and only seem to purify it. Where, then, can the cleansing process begin? There is one combination of words which we purposely omitted



in order to introduce it here. That combination is "self-respect," and it contains all that is necessary for moral action. It contains pride. We return once more, therefore, to the theory of conduct which demands that the beautiful should be the goal of human life, and which insists that without such a goal human existence has either no meaning or only a meaning that is sordid. We shall be told that self-respect is a purely relative idea, that it differs during different eras and in different races; that the self-respect of a savage, for example, consists in being an utter savage, and that a cannibal who respects himself must kill and then eat his victim. Undoubtedly. But we are not dealing with savages. We are dealing with human beings who are supposed to have abandoned the condition of cannibals when every inhuman cutlass had its human cutlet. The doctrine which demands noble action is not rendered futile because human action still remains ignoble. It is evident that just as the higher intellectual effort is beyond most of us, so the higher ethical effort which needs nothing but a fine emotion as its motive power may seem to be still far away. It may even be that the human swine fever can never die out. And, of course, as long as the swine

remain in their styè the most skilful sanitary engineer is incapable of creating sanitary conditions. Some things reach their natural level only in the septic pit. But any one who pretends not to know what self-respect is or what the aesthetic motive of conduct can achieve is either a trifler or too incapable of understanding either a moral or an aesthetic problem.

But it may be reasonably asked, if the beauty of an act is to be the standard of behaviour by what agency is such a principle to be carried out? Is the human will to be the agent? And if so, is the will free? Now we have seen the importance of Brentano's identification of feeling and volition. It is one of the greatest discoveries ever made in psychology. I have seen it verified both in personal experience and in my observation of the behaviour of other people. The action of what we call the will is feeling at its full expression. The will conceived as a power sitting apart in the mind and yet immersed in it is a fiction. For the will is only a state of feeling or passion which has become dynamic, and is, at a given moment, passing or it has passed into realization. So that a feeling for the beautiful in conduct, for instance, is spontaneously awakened and expresses an inner need.



There is thus a categorical imperative of beauty. And whereas the categorical imperative of the Ten Commandments is a violent assault on the human being from without, the categorical imperative in its aesthetic form is an impulsion from within. It is the self's own expression of itself and it means perfect freedom. This, of course, is not Brentano's doctrine. Nevertheless, if there is to be a question of conscience in the old sense of that word then it may be pointed out that no conscience could display more sensitiveness and integrity than the conscience of the real artist in the creation of beauty. It is that kind of conscience which, by means of the aesthetic doctrine of moral action, is carried over into practical life. The ethic of the Ten Commandments or of any commandment is an ethic to control the mob, and there is a mob of all ranks. But the feeling for beauty is a form of determinism which the enlightened human being accepts without hesitation as an urgent need of his own life. It is the self-compulsion which ensures our liberty amid the shackles of the flesh. If, however, the reader still clings to the idea of a will as necessary for the realization also of this theory of ideal behaviour, but remains troubled as to whether such a will could be free, he should con-



sult that very remarkable person the Abbé Galiani whose treatment of the problem of freedom has never been surpassed for clearness. Galiani was a friend of many of the French thinkers of the eighteenth century, and he was himself a free thinker. In the following sentences I shall reproduce his views on the question which is troubling us. They are these: The belief in his own free will forms the very essence of a human being. We could almost define a man as an animal who imagines himself to be free, and in fact such a definition would be complete. This is the first point. The second is: Does a persuasion that you are free amount to the same thing as being really free? The reply is that it is not the same thing, but that so far as morality is concerned it creates the same effects. Man, therefore, is free because he is intimately persuaded that he is, and this state of mind has exactly the same value as freedom itself. Here, then, we have a clear explanation of the mechanism of the moral life. Yet, if there were a single free being in the universe there could be no God, and there would be no binding relations between one human being and another. The world would fall to pieces. On the other hand, if man were not in his heart thoroughly convinced of being always free the moral links

of human society would snap. But the conviction of freedom suffices to create conscience, remorse, justice, rewards, and punishments. It suffices for everything.<sup>1</sup>

In this striking statement we find a brilliant member of the Catholic Church accepting the philosophic conclusion that the feeling of freedom is an illusion but a valuable and indispensable illusion. But even in science there are necessary fictions. The Equator is a fiction. It is only an imaginary line. The axis of the earth or indeed any axis is also an imaginary line; but these and similar hypotheses are required for scientific calculations. If, then, such fictions are useful and necessary in the sphere of knowledge why should we be disturbed if our practical life likewise needs to be carried on by means of a supposition? In any case, the doctrine according to which the highest motive for conduct is to be found in its aesthetic value makes the question of freedom irrelevant. It is indeed unlikely that a philosophy which can perform no miracle except the miracle of beauty in action will be able to move the multitude. But, after all, who wants to stick fast on the great sand bank of mediocrity?

<sup>1</sup> See a letter to Madame d'Epainay dated Naples, 25 novembre, 1771.—*Choix de Lettres du XVIII siècle*, G. Lanson, pp. 451, 452. Paris, Hachette, 1921.





CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AS PASSION



## CHAPTER IV

### RELIGION AS PASSION

**I**T is not generally recognized that belief had at first nothing to do with religion. The word belief meant originally "to like" or "to hold dear," and it comes from the same Indo-European root as the word "love." It had a purely human significance, and it implied a feeling born within human conditions and relations. Here, then, we discover once again a word whose inner meaning has undergone immense change. For belief gradually came to mean the acceptance of various dogmas, and its ancient meaning was forgotten. Nevertheless, that meaning still provides us with a key to the inner character of religion which is a state of feeling of a particular kind. Its history proves that it was often and still is a state of intense passion. Yet in the management of the passions properly so called an important rôle is often assigned to



religion, and this is all the more remarkable since religion itself not only intensified human passions but added to their number. It filled the world with strife, persecution, and war. We have only to remember the wars which broke out within the Christian world itself and between Christianity and Islam in order to recognize the fact that religion has been one of the great disturbing factors in human life. The power of every religion has consisted in its double claim as supreme guide not only in this world but also in the next. The word "eternity" is only a human word meaning "enduring for an age," or it is an accumulation of ages, a vast sum in arithmetic. But owing to the working of the religious imagination a sense of awe began to surround a conception involving two infinite magnitudes, one in space and the other in time. For the religious consciousness merged both in a moral magnitude, and called it eternity. The fear and trouble which this word has caused in the human mind may be felt in every form of religious literature and even in literature which is not essentially religious. Perhaps the most vivid expression of this anxiety is to be found in some lines of Andrew Marvell, who confessed his perturbation

in view of "deserts of vast eternity." The general belief which religion encouraged was that the human self owing to its commitments in the affairs of Time carries over all its responsibilities into another existence. We may say, then, that the tendency of all religious belief was to create the state of alarm. It caused "a fearful looking for of judgement," and its power has been displayed in its direct action on the feelings. Moreover, a new self—the religious—was superimposed on the mere moral self which was considered to be incapable of exercising sufficient authority. It was against this view that many of the most important thinkers of the eighteenth century directed their reasoning and their arguments, but it still prevails. The older derivation of "religion" from the Latin word *ligare*, to bind, has, indeed, been discarded in favour of another derivation involving "fear of the gods" in opposition to the attitude of neglect of the gods. Nevertheless, the dominant idea in religion is undoubtedly one of control, something that ties and binds like a ligament or a ligature. The governing conception is submission, and the act of kneeling in prayer symbolizes a situation of utter inferiority. The sense of fear and of peril



is therefore never wholly absent from the average religious self although, as we will admit, a few outstanding figures in religion, just as in morals, are able to attain greater freedom and independence. The general attitude is prostration before infinite power on account of sin. This feeling of the need of prostration was oriental before it invaded the western world. Prostration on the part of his subjects was always demanded by the sovereign. One of the causes of dissension between Alexander the Great and his military staff was that that monarch, as soon as he had reached the East, demanded that even Greeks should prostrate themselves before him. Now religious ideas and customs have invariably reflected the social and political practices of the region in which the religion arose. A slave power, for example, gave expression to its religious consciousness in such a way that the relations of human beings to their divinities were merely the counterpart of their relations to their earthly rulers. And every power was a slave power. Even among the Hebrews, whose servile system was more humane, the idea of religious servility continued. In religion the earth is described as only the "footstool" of the Almighty, and in this



vivid image the prostrate condition of mankind as slaves is portrayed. So that the religious self was slave born. It was amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai and in an atmosphere of terror that it listened to the law. Moreover, this atmosphere was continuous in its darkness and density throughout the Christian era. We have only to recall medieval liturgy and the pictures of a Last Judgement in the work of a painter like Orcagna to become convinced that during many ages the idea of divine wrath haunted the religious imagination and wrecked the human mind. Religion in many of its forms introduced among mankind a situation similar to what takes place during a state of siege or the proclamation of martial law when public excitement is either open or more or less concealed. The scheme of earthly hierarchies and the system of rewards and punishments meted out in human courts of justice were taken over bodily by the religious imagination. A last assize, a supreme judge, a trembling prisoner, and a code of supernatural penalties were all obvious imitations of ordinary legal procedure or human vendetta. There is not a single religion which does not betray its mimicry of the temporal conditions in which it

originated. The arrangements for eternity are only the arrangements of Time on a grandiose scale. During thousands of years mankind were content to worship mere names behind which there was nothing. Astarte and Zeus, Apollo and Diana never existed, and yet their names created awe. Immense power, religious and political, was grouped around the fantastic titles of inexistent divinities. In Babylon human sacrifice was offered to Baal and in Carthage to Tanit, but both were empty names. Every mythology, in fact, was only a vast illuminated palace of hallucination. There was a legend in Crete that when Zeus was born he was suckled by a sow, and another legend made his wet nurse a goat. Zeus was prehistoric, and as a wolf he became the totem of a wolf clan. But he was also worshipped as a snake.<sup>1</sup> On Mount Lycaeum, as elsewhere in Greece, human sacrifice was offered to Zeus just as it was offered to Jehovah by the Jews. And in ancient Greece as in ancient Israel human sacrifice was an attempt to conciliate an angry

<sup>1</sup> "We are brought face to face with the astounding fact that Zeus, father of gods and men, is figured by his worshippers as a snake."—*Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Jane Ellen Harrison. Second edition, p. 18. Cambridge University Press, 1908.



deity. The story of the ram offered up by Abraham instead of his own son means nothing at all if it does not mean that human sacrifice had already existed among the Hebrews. The episode is proof of the effort of the intelligentsia to restrain and abolish the practice of immolation to Yahweh. The horror of child sacrifice is brought too vividly before us by the description of what happened in the attempt to give satisfaction to Moloch. "The bronze idol stood with his arms extended and his hands sloping downwards so that the infant placed upon them slipped off and fell into a pit full of fire that was placed beneath, and its wails were drowned with the noise of drums."<sup>1</sup> Human sacrifice in the form of maidens was offered even to Athena, the most spiritual of all the figures in ancient mythology. Plutarch's definition of superstition as "a wrong judgement inflamed by passion"<sup>2</sup> remains true throughout the history of religion down to our own day. It was passion which opened the doors of the Spanish and the Italian Inquisitions, and which devised the rack, the

<sup>1</sup> L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, vol. i. p. 28. Clarendon Press, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Harrison in *Prolegomena*, p. 4.

*A nasty book.*  
— Akh



thumb screw, and the stake. So tenacious is religious passion that we have no guarantee that torture and persecution might not be revived even in this late age by an omnipotent hierarchy. In the earliest form of the Christian tradition the world was warned that the peace and good will of the gospels would be frequently broken by the sword which Christianity also brought. The prediction has been abundantly justified. The crusades, the religious wars in Europe, the persecution in the Netherlands, the atrocities which accompanied the catholic conquests of Mexico and Peru, force us to accept the startling but perfectly reasonable statement of Elie Faure that Christianity has killed more men than were ever killed by Napoleon. During the recent Italo-Abyssinian war Bishops blessed warships and guns and aeroplanes carrying poison gas as well as bombs. What are we to say of a creed which is able to destroy its own precepts with such ease? Its defenders have always had an impossible task in their attempt to conceal the facts in a smoke of rhetoric. The truth is that religion is the most sensational of all news if it means, as it must, either that Providence was the original although indirect author of the blood-

stained scene of history, or was unaware that such a scene would arise, or was impotent to prevent it. Like every other human enterprise religion has been an inextricable blending of good and evil. The impartial investigator must try to separate the one from the other, and he must neither exaggerate the evil nor conceal the good. Just because it has been a phase of human passion religion contains impurer as well as purer elements. It would be wrong as well as ridiculous to deny the value of Christian ethic and Christian kindness. We are compelled, therefore, to leave the contradiction as it stands. But we may point out that the need of some effort to lessen the woes of mankind would have found expression in the course of ages apart from any special religious sanction. Besides, as Shaftesbury observed, the fact that many an unbeliever has shown greater moral rectitude than many a believer proves that so far as conduct is concerned religion is superfluous. For we have already seen that an act in order to be judged as good in itself must be independent of any outward authority, temporal or eternal. From this point of view religion can bring nothing new in morality. Its great charitable organizations possess their



moral value not because they are religious but because they are charitable.

The outstanding feature of the religious idea is the variety of shapes which it has assumed. There has been a vast foison of religions as there has been a foison of vegetation. Schism is a second characteristic of the religious consciousness because one religion breeds another. Talleyrand complained that England possessed seventy different creeds but only one sauce. In religion conformity is invariably followed by non-conformity. The three greatest religions of mankind were the result of revolutionary action within older religions by three powerful personalities—Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed. What was common to each of those movements was an impulsion towards a purification of religious manners. Each of them was an effort to reach a new stage of feeling. But since the religious consciousness has expressed itself in so many different ways it is not easy to discover where certainty lies. One dogma is the enemy of its rival, and the holders of each creed believe that their own is the true one and that all the others are false. The Hindu abhors the Moslem, and the Moslem the Hindu. While both of them



are hostile to Christianity an attempt is made by Christianity to undermine each of them by missionary work. But if Christianity is the only true religion it ought to have enjoyed supernatural guidance and should have remained unadulterated and pure. On the contrary, it became so impure and corrupt that revolution and reform became urgent. We have only to turn to the pages of Sarpi, the great historian of the Council of Trent, to discover that the Vatican had become a scene of worldly intrigue. An attempt to assassinate Sarpi, who was himself a priest, was carried out by the Jesuits, and he made a celebrated pun on the event. No one is going to believe that Jesus could ever have been a Jesuit. He would have glanced with amazement at a man like Torquemada. If Christ entered a Catholic or even an Anglican cathedral the meaning of the service would have to be explained to him. Almost the entire ritual would be unintelligible, and he would demand a guide-book. For religion like every other human institution has suffered numerous incrustations in the course of centuries.

Now we have seen that the civilized self is an artificial creation due to the action of the social

surroundings on the life of each individual. In like manner we shall see that the religious self is a product of the religious environment, and that the method of extension of religious ideas is exactly similar to the mode of propagation of political systems. In both cases the action of the collectivity begins in the childhood of each potential convert when the child accepts passively all the suggestions which are made to him. In both cases we observe the influence of the crowd, and by the crowd I do not mean the crowd in the street. I mean the mass of human beings who form any given society in which the individual is educated. That society had already come under similar influences from the generation which preceded it, and so on in an ever lengthening chain backwards. It is in this way that the great molar mass of tradition becomes consolidated and irresistible. Let us, therefore, try to suggest the parallel lines of evolution of religious and political ideas in order to show that in the one case as in the other conviction and belief are the results of the same process. The word "conviction" is in itself sufficiently startling because it means the state of being conquered or overcome. In both cases the self succumbs to the forces which



besiege it. Our question is, How far can the religion of the individual be considered a spontaneous and independent growth?

One of the peculiarities of mankind is their need of some visible symbol as a rallying point. All kinds of emblems were invented and employed as material signs of corporate unity for purposes of aggression, propaganda, or defence. Even today there is not a public body without its symbol of authority. The House of Commons cannot meet without its mace, and every university and town council possess similar tokens. Every nation has its flag. In all armies each regiment has its own colours. This characteristic of the human race is of immense antiquity; it is primeval, and it carries us back to the totems of savage tribes. For the totem whether as animal or plant was prehistoric. We are not at present concerned with its influence on tribal marriage customs such as exogamy but only with its unifying action as the religious symbol of the tribe. The word itself in its original American-Indian form was *wutohtmoin*, which was the name of the symbol of the Objibays or Chippeways, a tribe of American-Indians who inhabited the northern and western shores of



Lake Superior. But the totem as clan deity who watches over the fortunes of the tribe has appeared in some shape or other in all religions. It should be remembered that the totem is not a fetich, for the former is public and known to all, whereas the latter is private and may be kept secret. The totem, in fact, is the primitive form of a national flag. It was the sign of religious and political unity, and its traces have been found everywhere even among the ancient Hebrews. Every member of the community was required to honour the animal or the tree not only as the visible proof of fellowship but also as the signal of supernatural guidance. The ark of the Covenant was also a totem for the Israelites. A religious relation of a magic kind linked the totem to the tribe. Moreover, the symbol was a password and pass-key which gave admittance to all other groups that acknowledged it. Bereft of its totem any community would have dissolved into a mere collection of individuals pursuing different and contradictory ends. It created a sort of freemasonry, with this difference that it was a password made public and was known to enemies as well as to friends. Moreover, it was probably carried as a standard at the head of a tribe on the march.

Now if we follow out in all its manifestations the idea which totemism embodied we shall find that it passed from savage into civilized existence. Religious practices are extremely tenacious, and they persist under various disguises. I do not know if it has been suggested by any other writer that the Cross and the Crescent are both essentially totems, and that their vast influence as rallying symbols can be explained in no other way. Both of them existed before they were adopted as standards by those rival creeds. The cross is prehistoric, and the crescent was not only in use in Byzantium before that city fell under Moslem rule, but it had already figured in ancient Greece on the foreheads of Artemis and Aphrodite. The adoration of the cross, in spite of the attempt of Christian apologists to distinguish it from pagan idolatry, was obviously a continuation of pagan practices. The form of the cross known as the swastika was a sacred symbol in ancient India, and its worship was widely distributed in the East. The prehistoric shapes of the cross are numerous, and crucifixion was the punishment reserved for brigands and fugitive slaves. It was only after the Emperor Constantine in honour of Christ had abolished



that mode of punishment that the cross became the central symbol of the Christian faith on account of the tragedy at Calvary. The sign of the cross, which is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament, had doubtless already been long in use by Christians in order to distinguish themselves from the pagans, and here, again, we notice the totemistic influence. The cross was also employed as an amulet and talisman to protect the wearer from peril on a journey, from shipwreck, disease, poison, and wild beasts. But there were other symbols such as the anchor, the dove, and the fish besides the monogram of Christ, consisting of the first two letters of his name in Greek. Alpha and omega were likewise used, and then, although very much later, there appeared in the fifteenth century the familiar I·H·S. I mention these well-known facts in order to show the significance of the totemistic idea in the Christian religion. For let us not forget that there has never been in the history of mankind any great displacement which abolished altogether what it had displaced. At least the world of religion is intensely conservative. Without the totem, as we have already observed, there would have been no cohesion in the various human



groups. It acted like a vertebra in what would have otherwise been a mere invertebrate agglomeration. Thus in a higher stage of civilization the cross and the crescent played the same part. In every religion there are to be heard echoes of earlier faiths. Ideas, usages, and ceremonies linger tenaciously, and in Christianity there was an immense carry over from the pagan world. As readers of *The Golden Bough* are aware the sacrifice of a divine leader or king on behalf of the community took place among African tribes. The idea of the incarnation is pagan if not prehistoric, and a very ancient rite explains the meaning of the Lord's supper.

Let us notice in the next place that as soon as a symbol becomes triumphant it begins to have a hypnotizing effect. It commands awe as well as respect, and as the visible sign of the god's protection of the tribe every member must bow to it. It is at this point that we shall begin to observe the action of the mass on the individual. Where conformity is almost universal non-conformity becomes impossible except perhaps to a few bold minds. In primitive society, however, there were no sceptics. The safety of the individual depended on the religious, political,

and economic unity of the tribe. Thousands of years would pass before religion and politics could be separated, and they are not separated even yet. The cohesion of the tribe or nation demanded the adhesion of every member in every relation of life. As soon as the cross and the crescent became in their turn the indisputable signs of divine protection any one who hinted doubts as to their efficacy became a public enemy. For he might be the cause of the explosion of divine wrath against the entire people. To destroy him became a duty. Thus we see religion and belief emerging as passions and sweeping all before them. This is the origin of religious persecution, and it explains the scenes of torture and murder which took place even within the bounds of Christianity. Passive acquiescence was insufficient. It became necessary to display zeal by active participation, and any one suggesting moderation became immediately suspect. If he expressed pity for the victims he would sooner or later become one of their number. In its gradual assumption of political power Christianity was merely repeating an historical tradition. In the earliest form of the State religion and politics were blended. Even in Great Britain



today the King is officially "Defender of the Faith." But in ancient monarchies the monarch was actually the intermediary between the nation and its gods, and the first act of a usurper was invariably to proclaim himself their appointed representative. Even in the republics of Greece and Rome the State as such was the consignee and legate of the divinity, and religious observances were carried out by its officials. The argument which we are at present developing, if it has any truth in it, proves that religion was at first public and political before it became private and personal, and that the religious individual is the product of the collectivity. Religion was the result of contagion. The direct relation between the individual and the divinity was eclipsed by the mediation of a special hierarchy which undertook the task of propitiation in the interests of one and all. In the case of Christianity the most complete expression of this politico-religious situation is to be found in the history of the Church of Rome. Even bereft of direct political influence the main characteristic of Catholicism is still the predominant rôle assigned to the hierarchy. A mutual parasitism, a form of symbiosis, has always existed between a religion



and its adherents. Apart from a body of doctrine upon which it feeds the religious self as an independent self-sustained organism does not exist. There is a parasitism of belief. The various religious systems transformed their world of believers into a vast dependence and almshouse on a vaster world of spirit. Religion was the search for supernatural protection against the dangers of natural existence, and it was the community or its representative as priest-king or merely priest who played the part of broker. It was hoped that by reverence for the divine totem and by propitiatory sacrifices offered in the name of the nation the safety of the individuals composing it might be secured. We may observe that in the case of Christianity there took place a decentralization of its totemism. The cross remained the central symbol even when, as in Protestantism, it became an empty cross, but each Christian community began to choose special protectors. The idea of the patron saint was widely adopted. Nations and cities selected this or that prominent personage of legend or history to be their particular guardian. Scotland chose Saint Andrew, England Saint George, Ireland Saint Patrick, Paris Sainte

Genevieve, Naples Saint Januarius, and Venice Saint Mark. Even individuals came under the personal protection of the saints whose names were given to them at baptism. But we may have said enough to prove that, however disguised, the influence of the totem as meaning generally magical protection has been as powerful in our own as in any other religion. The temptation, indeed, is to maintain that it has been even more powerful. The two facts of importance are the existence of the rallying symbol and the contagion of suggestion which it exercises on the individual mind.

A glance at contemporary political events may help us to understand the process of the creation of religious belief as a phase of human passion because the main lines of that process are the same as in the creation of political opinion. The rise of Fascism and of Hitlerism reveals the mechanism of development. An individual with the capacity of intense convictions becomes possessed of a new political idea. He gathers round him a few adherents, generally poor men hostile to the prevailing régime, and determined to overthrow it. Those men are the apostles of the new faith and are ready to take risks. At



first they and their leader are derided. They are even persecuted, and are sent to prison as enemies of the social order. The Italian and the German dictators were both charged with sedition, and were confined as political delinquents. But the movement continues silently and often secretly. Imprisonment, fines, and the shedding of blood in encounters with the police or the military do not arrest the social revolution. On the contrary, such sacrifices impress onlookers, who gradually become convinced of the sincerity of the new movement. The novel political creed begins to receive more and more attention, and is to be reckoned with as a serious proposal for the solution of the national problems. The ranks grow denser, the leaders are now listened to with respect, and when those of them who have been imprisoned return among the people they are acclaimed. There exist already symptoms of the coming victory. A symbol has been chosen, and it is displayed on all occasions. In the case of Fascism it was the lictor's rods and axe, in the case of Hitlerism it was the swastika. These are the totems of the respective movements. The revolution is now in full progress, and the day has arrived when the symbol which was once



ridiculed or despised is now received with enthusiasm. Even long before the final triumph that symbol or totem had begun to hypnotize the crowd. But when the triumph is complete the symbol too has become omnipotent for it is now the rallying banner of the majority. Outward and instant recognition of it is demanded, and those who refuse to uncover on its appearance in the streets are in imminent danger. To flout it or even to remain indifferent involves a charge of treason, and to attack it means death. The new creed exercises irresistible magnetic attraction, and its triumphal processions with flags flying, drums beating, and bugles blowing draw the multitude. All opposition has been annihilated, and those who sneer inwardly are too cautious to betray their feelings. Besides, the new faith is already being taught to the children, who are enrolled as members, so that at least during a generation the future will be secure. But let us note that apart from the final adhesion of the mass the revolution never could have taken place. A single individual, even a group of individuals, can do nothing unless the mass moves. Thus owing to the anonymous, irresponsible crowd swayed by the passions of hope and fear

a new kind of politics has appeared in the world.

But history proves that the propagation of religion took place in exactly the same manner. Without the co-operation of the crowd the three greatest religions of the world—Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—never could have triumphed. During the first hundred years of its existence Christianity was embraced chiefly by the most ignorant and the most oppressed classes, overwhelmed in poverty and awaiting a deliverer. In the New Testament there occurs the significant statement that “the common people heard Him gladly.” There is abundant evidence that their main interest lay in the material benefits which might accompany the new faith. A religion which announced that by its means five thousand people could be fed on five loaves and a few fishes was certain to find many followers. The miracles of the pagan gods seemed trivial in comparison, and in ancient religions miracles were a form of advertisement and broadcasting. The older gods of paganism had done nothing to alleviate human distress, and ancient beliefs were so ripe that they were now rotten and in decay. Among the Jews there



lingered the hope that the Messiah would at last found his kingdom on earth, and it was a kingdom of material riches and glory that they expected. In spite of persecution or because of it the Christian impulse became stronger and stronger, and the new values which it introduced began to be recognized. Christianity was already becoming a social force in the State. But no real advance was possible apart from political action, which in due time was supplied by Constantine, the apostate. I am aware, of course, that the epithet is always reserved for Julian, but this is only an example of the dulness of historians. Obviously it was Constantine who, during his descent into Italy in the fourth century, apostatized from the old faith of pagan Rome. On the other hand, Julian, whose Christian training had always been irksome to him, returned to paganism as soon as he became his own master. It was the dubious conversion of Constantine which opened the way to the political future of the Church. Constantine never really abandoned paganism, and his alliance with Christianity was the result of reasons of State. To the end he accepted divine honours, and this form of blasphemy had always deeply shocked the



Christian conscience. The old pagan rites of divination were also retained by the imperial convert, and at his court pagan philosophers rubbed shoulders with the thinkers and scholars of the new faith. Nevertheless, in A.D. 312, he adorned the old Roman cavalry standard with a golden wreath encircling the monogram of Christ, and from that moment Christianity became a world religion. The two main facts, therefore, are that Constantine was the political founder of Christianity, but that his action never could have taken place unless during the three preceding centuries the new belief had been spreading among the crowd. The real preparation for the final triumph had been carried out by the anonymous multitude. To those twin facts, each of them momentous but the one dependent on the other, the European religious consciousness owes its origin. But now let us observe that the temporal power of the Papacy, the creation of a rigid standard of orthodoxy from which it was perilous to deviate, and the destruction of the liberty of thinking were made possible by political power. Without that power which quelled and annihilated opposition by means other than religious the Church could not have created the

western type of religious belief. Yet when we trace the entire propaganda to its origin we must always return to those "common people who heard Him gladly," that is to say, an illiterate Syrian crowd. There and there alone do we find the nucleus of the vast ramifications of Christian doctrine.

But we must state all the facts fairly. To that same Syrian crowd we owe the bright as well as the darker elements of Christian history. No doubt intolerance and fanaticism became organized, a dangerous religious espionage centred in the Inquisitors, and leaders of militant persecution, like the Duke of Alva, appeared on the scene. But there were genuine saints; there was a doctrine of pity and love, and beneficent influences of a far reaching kind began to work and are still active in the Christian world. Every great undertaking has had its representatives and its misrepresentatives, and the element of paradox is seldom absent from human affairs. No wise historian makes any attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, and he leaves the paradox as he finds it. But in the confused phantasmagoria of history with its alternation of darkness and mirage the searcher for final meaning often



feels like a lost traveller bewildered in the wilderness.

The average modern believer has no time and perhaps lacks both the desire and the training needed for the examination of the credentials of those who were the real authors of his spiritual convictions. In this way tradition unanalysed and unscrutinized is handed down from one generation to another. We have now seen, however, that when either a new religion or a new nationalism has triumphed and is able to enforce its doctrine by means of persecution or the death penalty the temptation to surrender becomes overwhelming. Christianity was cruelly persecuted in its earlier stages, but as soon as it reached power it, too, adopted the policy of persecution. The imperial standard emblazoned with the monogram of Christ marked one of the great turning points in human history, and the road became clear for the advance of a religion rapidly becoming militant. For although later there took place a collision between the interests of the Empire and of the Church there remained the natural affinity between secular and religious absolutism. A striking confirmation of this fact is seen in the alliance



between Fascism and the Vatican. The Church's thirst for power even expressed itself in military terms. A warlike Pope like Julius the Second led his own army in person, and throughout the medieval period priests and bishops rode to battle. The Vatican even allied itself with the Turk against the Christian State of Venice. The point which we are attempting to make clear is that it was not only as a religious institution but also as a formidable political power that the Church organized the beliefs now held by millions of Christians. Religion became organized passion. When it attains political influence it consolidates its doctrines by means of forces which are not religious at all. The progress of Christianity like the progress of every other cult was first endemic and then epidemic. Just as a fever it affected single districts, and then by contagion passed into other districts until a whole nation and then a whole continent were involved and enveloped. When the process of contagion showed signs of weakening recourse was had to constraint. When resistance has finally been overcome and prestige and glory belong to the new creed, whether it happens to be religious or political or both combined, other

and more subtle influences begin to work. Long after the period of coercion has passed those who stand apart from ceremonies in which a whole nation shares are looked at askance. The period of religious snobbery has set in. Religion has become a badge of social distinction, and unbelief is considered "bad form" and vulgar. At least outward acquiescence must be given, and the era of hypocrisy has arrived. The point of view which expresses the social value and convenience of religious observance appears in the celebrated *Letters* of Lord Chesterfield who warns his son never to betray in society the irreligious sentiments which he may quite reasonably hold. Heresy has become bad manners. So that even when the religious idea has lost its early vitality as a phase of feeling or of passion and has degenerated into an affair of routine or social decorum, the community never relaxes its grasp on the individual who is its product in religion as in everything else.

If there is any truth in the foregoing suggestions the human personality in its religious aspect is a creation of the mob of believers. I do not use the word "mob" in any contemptuous sense. I do not mean a disorderly crowd. Our word



“mob” is merely the first syllable of the Latin adjective “mōbile” which means “what can be moved” and then too easily moved. It stands for the unstable, impressionable, passionate, and pathetic element which human beings display in the emotional experiences of life. There are all kinds of such mobs, although political and religious passion have often been so closely blended that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the one from the other. We have shown that without the action of the great mass of believers, whose first nucleus was the inquisitive crowd that listened to the new teacher in Palestine, the modern Christian self never could have existed. Its beliefs have all been transmitted to it. But the same process took place in the religions of Buddha and of Mahomet. A new-born infant left on an uninhabited island and allowed to grow up apart from any human contact could know nothing either about Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam. And he would likewise know nothing of politics and other social influences. But within organized society religion even in a greater degree than politics is an instigator of the emotions. Both make a special appeal to the masses. Any one who has watched the pro-



ceedings in a revivalist meeting and in a meeting of political revolutionists must have observed the same tendency which causes reason to be eclipsed by feeling. The Pentecostal scene in the Acts of the Apostles is a description of the first revivalist meeting, and the elements of religious hysteria are already present. Religious passion just like political passion is communicated with the speed of electricity, especially if some individual of oratorical power becomes the mouthpiece of the general excitement. In the mob the individual loses his personality. He is swamped in the emotional undulations which are taking place around him. Hysteria is in the air. Each person freshly affected becomes a new centre of contamination. When everybody is saying yes it needs a cool and courageous head to say no. The influence of collectivism whether religious or political reduces each individual to the lowest common denominator.<sup>1</sup> There must be no distinction, no variety. During the singing of the common anthem, which expresses the aspirations of all the faithful, no one would dare to add variations of his own, and if he did his voice would be lost

<sup>1</sup> See *Psychologie Des Foules* by Gustave Le Bon. Page 159. Paris. Alcan. 1934.

in the general chorus and hosanna. The crowd breathes the electricity of suggestion, and any doctrine which it embraces is finally assured of success. The word "fanaticism" had originally only a religious signification. It meant being inspired by all that took place in the temple (*fanum*), and then it began to convey the idea of religious exaltation or insanity. As long as the collective excitement lasts the individual who has already lost his own personality and power of independent judgement is prepared to believe anything. If he expresses doubt he is regarded as an enemy. "He," said Hume, "must be more or less than man who does not kindle in the common blaze." The high tension of the crowd brings about a condition of voluntary slavery, and participation becomes inevitable. The fury of the Bacchic rites in the Orphic religion had its modern equivalent in the fury of Catholic and Protestant mobs crying for vengeance on their enemies. The statement that religion is the great equilibrating force is merely historical nonsense. On the contrary, all the religions increased the forces of disorder because they added to the passions of mankind. We spoke of the panic of horses smitten by sudden,



contagious fear in the prairie, but panic was originally religious. It was the state of ecstasy and exaltation inspired by the god Pan. In some form or other panic always hovers above a crowd. In religion as well as in politics mankind have frequently been the victims of the monster with many heads, and some of the heads are empty. The cry for miracles was constantly repeated by the crowd in the New Testament, and the fact affords us some indication of their level of intelligence. For them "the bright preacher of life," as Blake called him, was to be only a magician capable of exhibiting "signs and wonders" and ushering in a raree-show. The mob hates reason and moderation, and its critical insight is inexistent. Consider the mental condition of the vast, vacant multitude who awaited in terror the dawning of A.D. 1000, because they expected the end of the world as foretold by the Scriptures. Nothing happened, and they went back to their beds. The impressionability of the mob is well indicated by the story of the tragic actor who had played the villain of the piece with such power and realism that he required police protection against the rage of the spectators who threatened to kill him



because of crimes which he had only been acting. Gustave le Bon mentions the case of Boulanger, who was universally hailed as the new saviour of France. His portrait was to be seen in every café and almost in every household. Even representatives of the intellectual class like Barrès believed him to be another Napoleon about to restore the imperial greatness of the nation. But he was only a charlatan. Napoleon, who abhorred the mob, knew that one sure means of capturing its imagination is by the perpetual repetition of the same phrases. For the crowd is a gigantic parrot addicted to the reiteration of banalities. A speaker who uses words cautiously, and attempts to make fair and moderate judgements on men and things can never do anything with the crowd. For the crowd prefers the hallucinating effect of continual affirmation without proof. At a fair the largest groups always surround the dealers in magic, and in politics the most successful demagogues have invariably been men of inferior intellect. But there are also demagogues in religion. The success of the one sort as of the other depends on the spread of the typhus of stupidity. The most absurd legends and the most ridiculous miracles which would have disgraced

Maskelyne and Devant have been believed by countless thousands of human beings in every century. In Naples there takes place every summer the liquefaction of the supposed blood of the patron saint of the city. The blood is kept in a vase and remains coagulated throughout the year. But on the day of the Saint in the great heat of a Neapolitan summer, and while the vase is surrounded on the altar by numerous electric lamps, the blood, of course, liquefies amid the acclamations of a heated multitude in the heated atmosphere of the cathedral, and the faithful disperse fully convinced of their patron's protection and goodwill. But if these are some of the characteristics of a modern religious crowd, what susceptibility to the passion of illusion was not displayed by ancient and medieval multitudes whose acceptance of certain doctrines was the governing factor in the formation of that solid block of religious tradition which still remains unshifted and unshaken? The safety of the individual believer is always the central conception, and this is nothing but an appeal to the feelings. The intellectual appeal is secondary if it exists at all. What could have been more absurd than a Roman crowd acclaiming an



Emperor as a divinity? Yet this happened over and over again, although the Romans were supposed to be a grave and serious people whose great system of law, by reason of its balanced judgement, still moves our admiration. Even the ponderous Senate, many of whose members belonged to the intellectual society of Rome, voted divine honours to the reigning monarch, and the adjective *divus* marked his elevation to supernatural rank. Anyone who dissented or demurred was immediately suspected as a conspirator.

Human history is the history of liberty staggering towards expression under fearful odds. For the attack against freedom comes not only from above but also from below. The people forge their own fetters. In religion they are the real creators of the idols which sooner or later they destroy. In politics, by their action or inaction, they are likewise the creators of their own despots whether as single tyrants or as irresponsible committees. The hour of revolt rings, indeed, at last but not until liberty has been lost. These are the twin cycles of religious and political passion.

If, now, the psychological causes of the consolidation of a religion are such as have been



briefly indicated, it becomes clear that the average religious self is not and can never be a spontaneous creation, but is only a re-transmitter of existing beliefs. If our reasoning is false then the vast multitude of past and present believers count for nothing in the creation of the religious beliefs of the individual. But this would be equivalent to saying that a knowledge of definite doctrines connected with historical events could spring up spontaneously in any human being who had received no information regarding them.

In all its aspects religion is an effort of the imagination, but in no other effort has there been such an intermarriage of the lower and the higher elements of human feeling. It is the most vivid of all mirrors of human hunger and human passion, human hope and human fear. So helpless was the religious imagination in its beginnings that it was compelled to choose as objects of worship the most sensual of all symbols. And when mankind made offerings to beasts it was out of fear because nature was filled with beasts, and they were dangerous and seemed omnipotent. Nevertheless, there came at length an effort, not indeed universal, to move away from the grotesque and the impure towards what was

fairer and purer. Gods of darkness became gods of light. Dark divinities of Babylon and Assyria were finally identified with stars. In Greece Apollo, who was once a god of the plague and perhaps of the bubonic plague, became synonymous with the sun. And in the case of individuals there were those who exchanged the blinding darkness of the senses for the blinding light of their own visions. We shall see later that the purification of the human mind was the work not of the religious but of the aesthetic impulse. It is obvious, however, that no fair-minded sceptic, no rationalist who has really examined the facts, can deny either the reality or the value of the higher phases of religious feeling. As one of the great passions of human life it demands the closest study. What is known as religious genius has the same psychological reality as poetic genius, and in fact they are akin. But in religion the emotional utterance is an attempt to escape from the anxiety which sooner or later accompanies mortal existence. For in some form or other it is the voice of fear to which we listen behind all the rhetoric and rhapsody of religion. The fact was admitted by Pascal. Yet there were serener temperaments than his, and they actually



found consolation and even joy in their effort to know the unknowable, communicate with the incommunicable and name the nameless. Wherever there is lyrical expression there is authentic emotion, and it is to be discovered in writers like Isaiah and Ezekiel, the author of the Book of Job, Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor, Bunyan, and Blake. The same quality of feeling may be found in many other religious literatures, in the penitential psalms of the ancient Babylonians, in the Vedic Hymns, and even in the Koran. We saw that as regards the moral life there are those who rise higher than the morality of the herd, and act independently of the rules of restraint because for them that act is good which is beautiful. In the same way, there are those who like Francis of Assisi or Meister Eckhart are able to break away from the sordid entanglements of an organized creed. The imagination may continue to act although the object which awakens it has only an ideal existence. This, in fact, is the secret of religion and art. The gods of Greece never lived either on Olympus or elsewhere, and yet they were an intense reality to their worshippers. Homer seems actually to hear the



clanging of Apollo's silver bow, and to witness the god's descent among the Greek host. Even the imagination of the rudest idolator is ablaze as long as he remains in the presence of his idol. The idol has no life but it seems to act like a living thing. Here the imagination is enslaved by an object, and yet it already attains a certain freedom because it endows an object of its own devising with qualities which it does not possess. The reign of fantasy has begun, and the freedom of fantasy will become greater as the object becomes nobler. At this point we may find that the word "belief" itself, which means "love," can assist us as a sort of ladder or companion way to the highest level and phase of feeling, that is to say, the phase in which the beautiful is loved for its own sake.



CHAPTER V

THE AESTHETIC IDEAL





## CHAPTER V

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**I**T is an error to consider the beautiful as a mere addition to human life: a casual accompaniment, the privilege of the few, an enjoyment for idle hours. On the contrary, its presence is needed during all the active hours of human labour. Plotinus said that "beauty lies in the Beyond." But it lies here, and if it were not here we should have to create it. The beautiful is not a simple accessory, an affair of decorative design or a vain adornment. It is a form of energy and a direct radiation. Without it human existence becomes an ignoble thing, even a thing of horror. It is not a superficial varnish and enamel. It is a dynamic influence. It may, indeed, lie on the surface and on the heights, but it comes from the depths. Where would the rose be without its root? The beautiful is neither luxury nor vanity nor superfluity. It is a necessity and ought to be a claim.

It embraces not only all the arts and all the sciences but the science and the art of living. Even Plotinus, whose gaze was averted from this world to a far-off world of dream, admitted that he approached what he called the divine by means of art, and he made beauty a member of his trinity. But neither he nor Plato could have reached the abstract idea of the beautiful apart from an experience of those beautiful things of space and time which each of them considered as only shadows of the real. It was not in the shadow but in the substance that they sought belief. Since, however, it is the Beyond which lies in shadow and is only a dream and a guess we ought to restore its proper meaning to the word "belief," for there are things to believe in here and now in this mortal scene. Why should we transfer it from the world we know to a world of which we know nothing? Only the mortal scene is really known to us, and all the rest is *vana sombra*. The first task of a human being is to put his own mortal house in order, and it can be done by mortal means. I will show that belief in the beautiful is the belief before which all other beliefs dwindle, and that it is our only way of escape from religious pessimism. For while religion



condemns life as wholly evil and the world as a scene from which we should seek deliverance, art bravely accepts life and the world and ennobles both of them. The aesthetic consciousness, in fact, absorbs every other; it has made religion purer and has provided it with its best moral elements. For the sake of our theme we must risk wearying the reader by repeating that belief is simply what is *lief*, that is to say, what is dear or liked or loved, so that the word itself comes warm from the great thermal spring of human feeling.

Now we are going to imagine that the sense of the beautiful has disappeared from the earth, or at least that it cannot find expression. All the works of art have perished, and mankind are unable to replace them. The great monuments are no more, the finest statues and bas reliefs lie in fragments, and there are no sculptors. The great pictures have likewise disappeared for ever, and there are no painters. In the highest sense of the word architecture is also a lost science. Public buildings and the homes of the citizens are now erected and furnished merely for the purposes of utility or shelter, so that every city is nothing but an assemblage of barracks. Moreover, gardening is a lost art, and the love of

trees and flowers has ceased. Because they are untended all the flowers have grown wild again, but even in their wild state no one looks at dawn coloured roses. Even the lower senses have deteriorated, and the smell of petroleum is preferred to the perfume of violets or wild thyme. The perception of lovely form as described by Winckelmann and Hogarth is also extinct as well as the appreciation of colour. The word "beauty" now means utility because industry is engaged in the production only of things for daily use. Life continues in order to provide food, drink, and the ruder kinds of recreation. Human beings have become as mechanical as the innumerable machines of which they are the slaves. The great literatures are dead and forgotten, and if any books are published they are only textbooks on trades, commerce, and machinery. The newspapers and the broadcasting companies give nothing but news of practical affairs and prices, and the theatres and cinemas reproduce only scenes from every-day life. The names of Aeschylus, Dante, Molière, Shakespeare, and Goethe now mean nothing. Lyric poetry is ridiculed as a childish occupation, and there is no one to call attention to the authentic fountains



of song. The gift of aesthetic discernment is completely lost, and the song of the nightingale is judged as inferior to the sound of a blatant voice announcing advertisements by means of a loud speaker. Music in the highest sense has long since ceased to make any appeal to the emotions, and the Ninth Symphony or Gluck's overture to *Iphigenie*, even if performers of them could be found, would be listened to with impatience and resentment. Humanity has gone machine mad, and finds its chief pleasure in the abomination of modern noise. The Moloch of materialism is worshipped and triumphant, and millions of aeroplanes pollute the firmament. The eyes for natural beauty are now blind, and no one looks at the sun when it is setting or when it is rising. Dwellers by the sea are no longer moved by the spectacle of sunlight beating upon beating waves. The stars which are the smokeless bonfires of the heavens shine unregarded, and no one remarks the moon passing across the night sky like the sun's ghost. In brief, all aesthetic values have vanished or have been inverted, and the reign of hideousness has also reached human relations. There is no beauty of conduct, and there is no self-sacrifice. At the most there is bare



justice which enables human society to hold together for purely economic purposes. Justice itself is grudgingly given and only in expectation of reciprocal advantage. Each citizen tolerates the claims of another because he demands that his own claims in turn shall be tolerated. In other words, aesthetic paralysis in every sphere of activity has overtaken mankind, who now pass their lives in a social Sahara.

This picture of a world from which the beautiful has been banished immediately raises the question—what, then, can it be that the aesthetic sense does for us? By imagining its total absence as a factor in human life we may be able to recognize more rapidly the enormous and indispensable part which it plays in the human scheme. Why is it, as Gracian asked long ago, that the imagination is never content merely with truth but demands beauty as well; and that architecture, for example, does not satisfy us if it provides only firm foundations?<sup>1</sup> The demand for beauty came early, even although its primitive expression was grotesque. If we follow the aesthetic idea from

<sup>1</sup> "No se contenta el ingenio con sola la verdad, como el juicio, sino que aspira a la hermosura. Poco fuera en la arquitectura asegurar firmeza, si no atendiera al ornato."—*Agudeza Y Arte de Ingenio*. Madrid, Edition 1929.

its dim beginnings—for its first efforts appear even in savage life—we shall discover that it not only endured but grew in power while one religion after another, one philosophy after another decayed and disappeared. Knowledge changes and passes, creeds perish and theories destroy each other, but art endures. We become bewildered by the variations and contradictions in Greek philosophy, but we feel immediately at home in the Plays of the Greek dramatists. The emotions portrayed are still our own main emotions, and they remain poignant. Only art is able to capture the fleeting instant, make the transient seem permanent and give timelessness to the things of time. For art reveals human feeling in presence of the excitement of life, and each generation feels that excitement anew. It might be objected that in art also there are opposing schools and doctrines and that different modes of expression appear one after the other. Old-fashioned music remains unplayed; a comedy which amused the last century no longer amuses us, and novels of a bygone age are left unread. But the art that perishes does not give expression to what is permanent in human feeling. Why has the work of Cervantes survived whereas the



romances of which it is the caricature have all been forgotten? Because Cervantes returned to life and nature, and the triumph of his genius and his humour is to be found in the fact that although he made use of a discredited medium he was able to portray human nature more vividly than it has ever been portrayed. We do not require to be Spaniards to understand *Don Quixote* or Greeks to share the agony of Agamemnon in *Aeschylus* or of Hippolytus in *Euripides*, and we do not require to be Italians to be stirred by Francesca's confession. We should need special training, however, to be able to understand all the subtlety of Greek dialectic, and we should almost need to be schoolmen to be able to take sides in the scholastic controversies of Dante's day. But the language of feeling does not vary. There is no new vocabulary for human affection, and there are no new gestures in human love. A lyric verse of three thousand years ago still moves us, as we are moved by a line of Villon or of Blake. We may put our finger on a bas relief sculptured in Nineveh or on a clay tablet moulded in Babylon. Perished peoples have left us their artistic handiwork like those Aegeans some five thousand years ago who made gold masks for the faces of the



dead. The faces have vanished but the masks remain.

Art is older than religion, but religion early took hold of it as a powerful instrument for its own purposes. The most primitive idolator had *made* things before he made an idol. Long before language had been elaborated religion depended on the plastic arts for expression. Undoubtedly the foundations of both are pagan, but it was the priest who first compelled the artist to work in the interest of religion. And it was in religion, not in art, that the element of stagnation lingered longer. The undeniable historical fact is that during thousands of years religion was a monstrous aberration of the human mind and that even in more spiritualized forms there can be discovered the debris of grosser beliefs. Art never degraded humanity as some religions degraded it. The aesthetic consciousness never brought such fearful disturbance and unrest into human life. It never fastened a parasitic priesthood on the world. It never created vast economic interests founded on human credulity. Art, indeed, was compelled, as we have seen, to lend all its forces to religion, and to supply the pictures and images which suited the century. Neverthe-

less, the purifying influences began to assert themselves in due time. In Greece beautiful statues of the gods appeared, yet all the models were human. It was the human hand correcting its earlier and ruder work. The position that we reach is, therefore, something like this: human imagination as it grows finer and more subtle transforms its own primitive creations, and begins to react on religious belief. So far as I can see this is the central fact in the history of the relations between religion and art. But just in so far as there is progress it is the aesthetic impulse which gains ground. Mankind become ashamed of their religions, and begin to humanize them. The conclusion at which the sceptic is tempted to arrive, however, is that just as there was no reality corresponding to the grosser phases of the religious imagination, so he is unable to discover a guarantee that there is any reality corresponding to the expurgated phases in which the grotesque and unseemly elements cease to appear or to be prominent. Both movements are entirely human, and therefore in the one case as in the other the theory of supernatural influence falls away. For the real and only factor of advance has been the aesthetic instinct demanding moral



beauty as well as physical decency. In modern Christian churches the vindictive element in the gospels is kept in the background. Religious teachers avoid reference to hell fire or explain it metaphorically as if they had become ashamed of the cruder aspects of divine rancour and revenge. The indecent passages in the Old Testament are shunned, and few preachers would read aloud in public a passage from the Song of Solomon such as we quoted in an earlier chapter. No one believes for a moment in the old-fashioned and pathetic attempt to discover spiritual allusions in a passionate love song. But what does this slow process of purification mean? It means that the religious consciousness which was supposed to guide the self is forced to submit to the self's own human sense of decorum. The rôles have been reversed. A new self is born, the aesthetic self which acts as a cleansing filter for all the grosser elements which religion had accumulated. The manifestations of what was once regarded as supernatural are required to undergo human censorship. But such a fact appears to prove the truth of my statement that the aesthetic consciousness finally absorbs every other, and compels even religious belief to submit to



transformation. It is, therefore, in the aesthetic formula, that is to say, the necessity of beauty in all that pertains to life that we reach the culminating point of human effort. The self in search of the beautiful is alone capable of founding a final theory of values. The riddle of the self which is the riddle of human feeling and passion in all their forms can never be solved. We never reach a definition of feeling. But here in this same world of emotion we find at last the opportunity of making the greatest constructive effort possible to mankind. In nature there is first formation and then transformation, and the same law should govern the human world. But the transformations must possess aesthetic value else they are nothing. A situation becoming uglier and uglier at last becomes intolerable. In religion as in politics mankind were and still are subject to collective insanity. At Tarragona, in the Museum of the Ayuntamiento, there is a sacrificial altar which had been raised to the Emperor Augustus, who had lived two years in that city and had been actually seen in the streets. The inscription is "Numini Augusti." He had been deified. In a temple bearing his name priests offered sacrifice to him because he had become a

supernatural power. He who had been feared as an earthly was now feared as a heavenly ruler. If mankind were at last to some extent delivered from such absurdities it was because the rebellion of the intellect was accompanied by the rebellion of good taste.

(It would not be difficult to prove that the impulse towards the beautiful changed the whole course of human history, and that if it had never come into play mankind never could have extricated themselves from the slavery of natural conditions. The delight of the savage in some rude and grotesque ornament of his own making was already of great psychological importance. The moment when men began to create things, to look at the earth as a spectacle of wonder, and to devise pictures of what they saw was the moment of mental emancipation. For it meant that instead of remaining fettered by their surroundings, and doomed to carry on from generation to generation the mere labour necessary for keeping themselves alive, they became onlookers, inquirers, and appreciators of the scene in which they were born. They had discovered the secret of employing their leisure, and had already in some fashion separated themselves from nature.



Our word "art" really means "skill," and it is the opposite of "inert" which means "without skill." So that in the absence of art even in the most primitive sense of the word there is no human life. The genesis of all the arts dates from the day on which mankind became critics and judges of what they saw around them. The pictorial designs adorning the walls of caves or carved on the antlers of beasts of the chase by the artist-huntsman in his hour of ease were the signals of the new world which the human race had decided to create for itself. Art thus became a dynamic need, and it brought immense changes into human existence. Art was advancing human freedom while religion was retarding it. For religion in its early forms introduced a double oppression—the oppression of the supernatural and of its earthly representatives impersonated in priest-kings and the priesthood. Besides, religion introduced economic changes involving taxation. Mankind began to be heavily taxed, and paid dues and imposts and even supertax for the sake of their souls. But art had no such consequences, and encouraged human beings to discover and enlarge a new world of independence on their own account. In religion the self became a



prisoner in a condemned cell, which was its own body, and it awaited a doubtful reprieve both in this life and in the life to come. But by means of art the prisoner escaped at least for a moment into regions of imaginative beauty. By means of the aesthetic sense, by the sense of humour and by sport, the self found a way out from the tyrannies of the supernatural and the natural. Banish all the religions, but leave intact the feeling for beauty in all its manifestations, and the human race would still create its own world of moral and aesthetic values. Banish all the arts and, as we saw, the human world would become a spiritual and social desert. The vast efflorescence of the creative imagination extends over a wider area than any religion can ever cover, and the mere religious instincts tended to paralyse man's activities as a natural agent. They never could have helped him to hew his way through nature and to make a home for himself. On the contrary they called his energy away from the world of substance in order to prepare for the world of shadows. During many ages the medieval church arrested the scientific advance and persecuted the scientists. In the superb phrase of Aristotle "the hand is the instrument of all instruments,"

and it was literally within the human hand and its fingers that the destiny of the human race lay. For the hand was the first tool, and it made and still makes all other tools. But a great discovery took place when it was noticed that the useful could also be made ornamental and that the scene of human labour may also be a scene of beauty. It was a discovery of the mortal self with eyes fixed not on immortal but on mortal things. As the desire for beauty became intenser a separation was made between the ideas of the merely useful and the beautiful, and loveliness in form, design, and colour and in musical tone began to be loved for its own sake.

In this problem of the beautiful and its profound meaning in our lives we must keep close to that world of feeling which forms the subject of our present study, and we must avoid all abstract theories which pretend to explain art by metaphysics or religion. All those attempts failed because their authors were generally devoid of the temperament necessary for understanding a work of art. I think that Menéndez y Pelayo was justified when he said that most of the philosophers of the beautiful would have been better employed if they had confined their



labours to theology, metaphysics, or political economy.<sup>1</sup> Artists usually look with a sort of indulgent pity on all abstract theories of the beautiful; and Hogarth made fun of the attempts of those who, although not artists, had the temerity to discuss the nature of art. But this problem of beauty is wider than the problem of artistic expression. As we have seen it embraces the whole problem of existence, and, indeed, the aesthetic consciousness has deeper foundations than even Hogarth knew. In any case, it is only right to acknowledge that it is to the philosopher Baumgarten (1714–1762) that we owe the important word “Aesthetic” which he was the first to use in order to denote the science of beauty. Since, however, no satisfactory definition of beauty has ever been found it might be helpful, at least for the moment, to consider Aesthetics as the science of sensibility expressed in forms of art. We shall glance later at certain views on that subject. Meantime, let us remind ourselves once more that it is in religion and art that human feeling reaches its intensest expression and that both of them have been the great

<sup>1</sup> *Historia de las Ideas Esteticas en España*. Tomo I, p. xvi. Third Edition. Madrid, 1909.



revealers of human passion. As we have seen, during many ages religious beliefs were the main source of artistic activity, although that source frequently contained unaesthetic elements. The gradual process of refinement which took place in pagan took place also in Christian art. In both cases the diffusion of belief was hastened by artistic means, and indeed without those means the diffusion of religion might have been impossible. The multiplication of images had the effect of modern broadcasting. Every one of the arts assisted Christianity to gain a foothold in the world. Architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, and music were the most marvellous forms of advertisement which any religion or any other human undertaking has ever known. Moreover, in their purest forms they ennobled their subject and had an ennobling effect on believers. The truth is that instead of art having been merely a parasite of religion it was religion that was the parasite of art. For Christianity was made more powerful by art just as Greek religion was made more powerful by great Greek architecture, sculpture, painting, and poetry. But all nature is the artist's domain, and it might be shown that the prolonged partnership between art and

religion tended to enslave the artist and to restrict him to a monotonous repetition of types. The distressing central figure of Christianity—the crucifixion—became an obsession. That picture is the perpetuation of a monstrous crime committed on the person of one of the world's great teachers, and it ought to be banished from civilization. It is a blasphemy against the human form. The profound and dramatic genius of Tintoretto did, indeed, surround the scene with an overmastering awe, and darkened it in order to subdue the emotions of despair and dismay. But the subject is too dreadful for art. And although the Greeks were familiar with the idea of a suffering and dying god, Greek art never would have eternized such a scene of horror. The Laocoon cannot be compared to it. It is very remarkable that Protestantism contented itself with the empty cross as if the crucifix with its cruel burden agitated too profoundly the human imagination. It was time for art also to escape backwards to its own true world of human feeling, form, light, colour, and gladness, and this is what happened at the Renaissance. Art clings to the sensuous universe of experience, and dies as soon as it is separated from it. The



human form, for example, had been shunned and condemned and had been considered by the medieval church as a thing to be mentioned with shame. It was not till the Renaissance that Leonardo da Vinci was able to think boldly that death was rather a disaster for the *soul* because of its severance from the body—"the body being such a marvellous thing." Even the Church in so far at least as it began to be influenced by its greatest man, Thomas Aquinas, became inclined to lay stress on the Pauline view that some kind of body is necessary, after all, for the soul's revelation of itself. In fact, Saint Paul appears to be unable to give up the body entirely, and he informs his correspondents that the carnal body which we know shall be raised in a spiritual form. But this is one of his bold paradoxes which lay bare the difficulties and contradictions of his own beliefs. The mere insistence on the need of a body at all seems to reduce in a vital manner the exclusive pretensions of the soul.<sup>1</sup> During the Renaissance mere spiritual existence was felt to be vapid, formless and insipid, pale and wraith-like and worthless to art. But this feeling meant a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paul Valery, *Introduction à la Méthode de Leonard de Vinci*, p. 23. Ed. *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Paris.



return, even when disguised and unconfessed, to the pagan world of sight and sound and touch in which the arts have their real home. In the gospels the human being appears only as a passenger tediously detained as he awaits his embarkation for the voyage to eternity where he will at last be delivered from the evil of the world. But it is precisely that same world which is the scene of the ecstasy and contentment of the aesthetic consciousness. There is no other known to it, and it is here that it discovers all its energy. Art is the only alchemist, can transmute baser into nobler metals, throw beauty even over a tragedy, and turn sorrow into song.

Now the transforming power which I have attributed to the aesthetic consciousness is denied to religion unless religion has reached the aesthetic level. The average religious person is compelled to seek his standards of value in a hypothetical world "above" the natural, but the aesthetic impulse finds them here, and then lends them to religion whenever religion attempts to make a human appeal. It is for this reason that the field of the aesthetic is wider than the field of the religious impulse. Art can do what is denied to religion. It can satisfy human needs

which religion ignores. For example, by means of comedy and the sense of humour it can change the whole appearance of life, whereas there is no place for humour or wit in religion because the believer is constantly preoccupied with the problem of his personal salvation. There may, indeed, be a feeling of comfort and even of gladness in the assurance of one's own safety in any future arrangements, but this is merely self-love and egoism, and there is nothing even moral in it. The average religious self remains ego-centric, and its faith is a form of self-love in disguise. We say "the average religious self" because it would be wrong to neglect notable exceptions. The mystics and those in whom religious belief has become poetry and ecstasy undoubtedly suppress the insignificant ego, and something oceanic enters into their lives. It is the result of imagination at high tension. For them the things of time are lost and submerged in the phantasmagoria of eternity. But art takes the self out of itself in order to enjoy the scene of life here and now. It whispers to us that, after all, our existence on the earth may be beautiful and gay in itself, and that it is to miss our chance and even to be guilty of a kind of impiety towards the tremendous gift



of life if we sacrifice it to perpetual solemnity. The first smile that wreathed human lips, the birth of wit and the sense of the ridiculous were already liberating factors from the monotony of existence. In a religious atmosphere the sense of humour is felt to be out of place, and is immediately extinguished as a flame is put out by smoke. Man cannot live by religion alone, and the gift of laughter has done more for humanity than a thousand creeds. Religion as such cannot provide amusement. If in modern Christian organizations some forms of entertainment and of sport are allowed they are the result of a policy of conciliation and concession, and they are a proof that certain kinds of human energy do not find sufficient outlet in a purely religious atmosphere. Man is a laughing animal; but within the bounds of religion he must lay aside his humour. There are, indeed, traces of humour in the gospels but they have been wholly ignored. The story of the man in bed with his children but unable to sleep owing to the loud knocking of some beggar at his door, and then compelled to rise and be generous merely in order to be able to resume his slumbers was probably told with a smile, and perhaps created smiles and laughter



in the audience. The portrait of the unjust judge who finally grants justice only because he has been bored to death by the constant appeals of the importunate widow was drawn by a satiric hand. And the picture of one blind person attempting to assist another with the result that both are presently in the ditch is the work of a pungent observer of human life. But when the day of dogma came there could be nothing but solemnity, and there are no jokes in heaven. But art can open its gates to caricature and even to the caricature of religious hypocrisy as in *Tartuffe*. One wonders what Molière, Rabelais, and Aristophanes could do with themselves during an eternity from which the comic spirit had been banished. In paganism art and religion were in close partnership, but in the medieval world religion became the dominant partner. Dancing had originally a religious significance if not a religious origin, and even David danced before the Lord. But no one expects to see dancing in a modern church. The Greek theatre had the festivals of Dionysos as its source. On the other hand, the attempt to continue the alliance between dramatic art and religion failed in the Middle Ages. During a certain period, indeed, Catholicism actually

busied itself with theatrical performances, although the chief stock-in-trade consisted of tableaux reproducing biblical scenes or plays representing the Passion as at Oberammergau to-day, or the massacre of the Innocents and the adventures of certain saints. Such dramas were staged in the nave or even in the churchyards, and they were performed by the clergy.<sup>1</sup> When, however, the plays began to be based on themes not strictly religious they were forbidden. The decadence of the theatre really dated from the recognition of Christianity as the official religion of Rome. Even although the western church tolerated for some time many of the pagan festivals which had lingered among the folk, the attack on plays and players had continued since the days of Tertullian.<sup>2</sup> The earliest secular plays were given by university students and by the famous Basoche. But when comic and farcical elements were introduced the alliance between the church and the theatre was at an end, and the divorce took place. This meant that religion in its modern form is incapable of supplying a very ancient requirement of mankind, and that

<sup>1</sup> See *passim* Julleville's *Histoire du Théâtre en France au Moyen Age*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Spectaculis*.



art must fall back on its own riches. Art, in fact, in all its forms provides the "exhaust" or valve of safety needed by human passion. Not until artistic and aesthetic freedom were recaptured at the Renaissance did the dramatic spirit begin to revive; and yet even after the Renaissance the theatre and all those who belonged to it were during several generations more or less ostracized. Even as late as the reign of Louis XIV an actor who desired Christian burial was compelled on his deathbed solemnly to renounce his profession and to express genuine contrition. When Molière was dying in 1673 the parish priests of Saint Eustache refused to come to his aid although he had urgently begged their assistance. He died without the sacraments, and the Archbishop of Paris refused Christian burial. The wife of the great dramatist then appealed to the king, and owing to the royal intervention a compromise was reached. The representative of the Church of Rome at length signed an order permitting interment in the cemetery of Saint Eustache, but the conditions were that the burial was to take place without any ceremony at all and after sunset! Such are the absurdities of religious passion from which the passion for art has



delivered us. And yet, as we have seen, religion was a persistent borrower from art, and could have made no progress in the world without that help. It increased its hold on human imagination by human means. Take away from Christianity all that art and especially all that music has done for it, and you take away more than half the spell. The rest has to do with the individual believer's private spiritual fortunes and fears. In the case of religion there is always a transaction, and the formula is—"No salvation without belief." But in its offer of pure aesthetic pleasure art is never transactional. Let us note in passing that even Islam, which is a religion without images, which forbids the use of the plastic arts as a medium of religious emotion, and which, because of its abstention from decoration is the most abstract and impressive of all faiths, nevertheless, makes dramatic use of the decoration of nature. For it is at sunrise and sunset that the muezzin mounts the minaret to call the faithful to prayer. This sense of scenic grandeur in its imposing simplicity is of infinitely greater aesthetic value than anything to be found on Christian altars, which often drip with gaudy ornaments like brides' cakes. In Catholicism Christianity be-

came overloaded with embroidery and embellishments, and in Protestantism it became merely dull. The aesthetic sense harassed and oppressed escapes from both of them and travels back to the new teacher in his more gracious moods when he summoned the lilies of the field to be his witnesses, or pointed to such familiar farm scenes as a hen with her chickens—one of the most beautiful scenes in nature—or to the loveliness of childhood. Only those who suffer from moral and religious ophthalmia are too blind to see the necessity of the aesthetic revolt.

Unless the aesthetic impulse humanizes it religion remains a dangerous force. Left to itself it has always destroyed the liberty of conscience and the liberty of thinking, and it has increased war among mankind. It made use of missiles as well as missals. But art brings peace. There never could have taken place simply because of divergent theories of the beautiful those fierce and sanguine divisions which were caused by conflicting creeds. Human beings have been persecuted, tortured, and killed in the name of God, but never in the name of art. Like nature art has no frontiers. Ideas like birds and seeds migrate from one latitude to another. Light and



warmth, electricity and magnetism, pass across infinite spaces, and nature, which has no barriers, sends her seas flowing round all the continents and her rivers flowing from one "country" to another. She has no "countries" and therefore no exclusiveness. Neither has art because sooner or later it overpasses all national boundaries. On the other hand, creeds are racial and national, and a spontaneous interchange never takes place. If I might venture to suggest a new word I would say that when mankind become a Kallocracy,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, a great community based on the conception of the beautiful as the motive of existence, the policy of barricading and shutting out would cease. Let it not be supposed that this insistence on the need of the aesthetic impulse in human life means that a sybaritic self-ease should be the goal of action. Far from it. But it means the riddance of all forms of ugliness in human relations. Many of the old faiths have become nothing but dragging anchors. Is it not possible amid decrepit beliefs to discover a new faith in life itself provided that the element of beauty be not absent?

We have noticed once or twice that the civilized

<sup>1</sup> κάλλος, beauty, and κρατεῖν, to rule.



self in its moral and religious aspects is the inevitable result of the social influences which surround each human being. Only in exceptional cases does this or that individual succeed in emerging with some kind of independence from the shackles and clamps of the environment. We have now to admit that what, for a better term, we call the aesthetic self may undergo similar persuasion and seduction. It is often moulded by the prevailing taste, and the prevailing taste may be bad. Taste, in fact, like religion is epidemic. There is a rise and fall of aesthetic standards, and the progress of civilization does not imply progress in art. On the contrary, in order to abolish or correct degraded art-forms it is often necessary to restudy work which was done three thousand years ago. In modern life vile taste has frequently accompanied abundant material comfort, whereas there was little of such comfort in the great age of Greek literature, architecture, and sculpture. Wealth often brings with it vulgarity. An era of almost perfect design is followed by an era of aesthetic demoralization. A great age of literature is succeeded by an age of mediocrity. But an attempt to discover the causes of these fluctuations would lead us too far from

our immediate theme, and it would also involve a discussion of the difference between talent and genius. There also arises the tedious question as to differences in taste. In his formula—*La règle du premier aspect*—the Abbé Terrasson announced an excellent precept for aesthetic judgment. That is to say, a work of art should be judged by the first impression it makes. But this gift of insight which is almost immediate depends on the instinct and on the degree of culture of the beholder. In the case of persons of great artistic sensibility the first impression is almost always the final impression as well. Thus the situation appears to be somewhat similar to the moral situation which we discussed in connection with Brentano's theory of the immediate recognition of right and wrong. That power of recognition depends on the spectator's endowment. There are some people incapable of judgement in the affairs of taste. A combination of colours, such as pink and purple, for instance, would attract some onlookers and offend others. Certain wall papers provoke and harass the eye, but they give delight to those who chose them. Why was it bad taste on the part of the Incas of Peru to place in their gardens trees and bushes and flowers



and leaves made of actual gold? If we cannot answer that question we should begin our aesthetic education without delay. Those who are in doubt concerning their instinct for the beautiful ought to seek the advice of recognized masters in the science. We would do likewise in other branches of knowledge.

What is beauty? Hogarth said that "although beauty is seen and confessed by all, yet the attempts to account for it have been fruitless," and he added that the problem was believed to be insoluble. He declared also that the nature of the subject lies beyond the scope of mere men of letters, and he complained that "such persons do fairly set you down just where they first took you up."<sup>1</sup> If he had lived into our own day Hogarth would probably have derided most of the efforts of those who have tried to establish a theory of beauty, and he would certainly have rejected the fallacies of Benedetto Croce. But Hogarth may fairly be charged with one-sidedness when he says that "to know what grace is requires a practical knowledge of the whole art of painting." If that were true even sculptors

<sup>1</sup> *The Analysis of Beauty*, p. ii. London. Printed for Samuel Bagster in the Strand.



would be debarred from any knowledge of grace and beauty. Painters might then despair of ever being understood, their art would be the exclusive secret of a coterie, and it would possess nothing communicable for the general mind. Aristotle saw deeper when he said that it is possible to have no knowledge of the rules of an art and yet to be a good judge of it, as was the case with the Spartans in regard to music. In an admirable phrase Hogarth describes the sense of sight as "the great inlet of beauty." But there are other inlets, and in the house of art there are many mansions. He represented his own conception of beauty by the famous "waving line." But it is impossible to accept that symbol as a sufficient or universal expression of the idea of the beautiful. Even within the restricted limits of the plastic arts there are artists who prefer the simple impressiveness of the straight line. The waving line on a twisted column is rather surprisingly described by Hogarth as "undoubtedly ornamental," whereas it is always hideous. And he immediately admits that twisted pillars "displease because they convey an idea of weakness improperly made use of in the case of supports to anything that is bulky or appears heavy."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Analysis*, p. 50.

If the waving line on a pillar is a vicious ornament, as it certainly is, then Hogarth's aesthetic principle breaks down even within the province of the plastic arts. It is interesting to note that Hogarth's attempt to give a linear definition of beauty influenced the great German critic Winckelmann. But according to Winckelmann the line which beauty describes is elliptic because, he says, that line contains unity in variety, whereas this is not the case in the circle.<sup>1</sup> These geometrical methods of attempting to define beauty are, I venture to think, inadequate and even useless. The truth is that there can be no complete definition of beauty even by means of human speech. Every effort has failed. The fact should not surprise us since we saw in earlier chapters that there always comes a moment when we arrive at the indefinable and the unknown. At least this invariably happens when we try to trace a feeling to its roots. We may be able to explain the relations between the component

<sup>1</sup> "Die Linie, die das Schöne beschreibt ist elliptisch, in derselben ist das Einfache und eine beständige Veränderung. Denn sie kann mit keinem Zirkel beschrieben werden und verändert in allen Punkten ihre Richtung."—*Die Kunstschöne und das Charakteristische von Winckelmann bis Friedrich Schlegel*, Ferdinand Denk, p. 10. München, 1925.



parts of an object which we call beautiful, and we may show also how all errors of composition have been avoided by the artist, but we are not thereby explaining the feeling of beauty which his work awakens. Suppose, for example, we say that beauty is symmetry. But an ugly thing may have a perfectly symmetrical arrangement of parts, and yet remain ugly. Therefore that definition breaks down. Besides, regularity and uniformity are not necessarily the chief elements of beauty, and, indeed, in order to avoid monotony artists introduce variety and even a certain irregularity into their works. A thing may be beautiful in its own being, and if so it would become ugly if anything even more beautiful were joined to it. A cart horse can be beautiful, but if you exchanged its head for the head of an Arab horse the cart horse would then look ugly and even monstrous. There is nothing uglier in my opinion than gilded gothic. Why? Probably because such ornamentation appears immediately meretricious in architecture, which gives and is designed to give the impression of gravity and a certain gloom. If, again, we say with Goethe that the search for beauty is the search for the characteristic the reply might be that



science also is engaged in the same effort. There must be, therefore, something which art adds to the search. What is it? The feeling for beauty. So that we have gone back to the point from which we started. It is precisely the feeling itself, the emotion in its fundamental elements which cannot be defined. The depth and fullness of feeling and its riches are always accompanied by the bankruptcy of language. The domain of the beautiful is too vast to be expressed graphically or even verbally. If we say that it is proportion, and that it never tolerates what is excessive and unwieldy we are immediately refuted by our own eyes. There are great, cumbersome beasts such as elephants and whales which, undoubtedly, possess a beauty of their own. There are huge, fantastic mountain ranges with terrific gorges, and they move our admiration. Besides, there are human faces which, by all the rules of proportion, ought to be ugly but which, because of their expression, especially in the eyes, cannot be considered ugly at all. There was the face of Mirabeau. He used to say that his ugliness was his power. We may add that there often enters into the aesthetic effect the element of terror. One of the boldest phrases in literature is the

description of Charlotte Corday by Lamartine. He was not a great writer or he was only a great writer of the second rank. Yet in a moment of audacity and vision he described Charlotte as "the angel of assassination." The aesthetic consciousness is thus able to contain even in the same instant the two apparently hostile elements—the beautiful—terrible. The tiger is beautiful but he is also alarming. There takes place the sensation of the beautiful-terrible in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus and in *Macbeth* and in *Lear*. There is the feeling of the terrible-beautiful in a thunderstorm when the lightnings are passing like fleeting tapestries across the landscape, in a storm at sea or a naval battle, or an advancing army covered by its artillery, or a fleet of aeroplanes flashing in the sunlight as they bombard a city or that same city in flames. In all these cases we make a rapid passage to and fro between the opposed emotions of wonder and horror, between the sense of beauty and the sense of awe. It is just because the aesthetic consciousness is able to absorb all such conflicting emotions of the human mind that I claim for it an universality which no other possesses. Its power and meaning could never be confined like the Athanasian



creed within thirty-nine articles. It accepts all that life gives but it transmutes all, and it offers a basis for a religion of wonder.

The fact that feeling is the foundation of great imaginative work has been denied by Croce, whose theory of Aesthetic rests on the identification of what he calls intuition with what he calls expression. His view is that there is no qualitative but only a quantitative difference between ordinary intuition and the intuition of genius.<sup>1</sup> This is merely nonsense. The suggestion is that the artist enjoys nothing but a more extensive field of vision than the ordinary spectator. Although the author of this theory is compelled to admit that feeling accompanies every kind of mental activity he contrasts feeling as such with "the aristocracy of the spirit," whatever that may be.<sup>2</sup> He maintains that those who consider feeling to be the essence of the aesthetic impulse are only Hedonists, who find no difference between the pleasure of art and of an easy digestion or between the pleasure of

<sup>1</sup> "Non si può ammettere che l'intuizione che si dice di solito artistica si diversifichi da quella comune come intuizione intensiva. . . . La differenza tra l'una e l'altra è non intensiva ma estensiva. . . . Tutta la differenza dunque è quantitativa."—*Estetica*, p. 16. Bari, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> "Lo spirito nella sua aristocrazia."—*Ibid.*, p. 88.



a good action and the pleasure of filling the lungs with pure air. But this appears to be only a misrepresentation of hedonism both as a moral and as an aesthetic theory. No genuine philosophic hedonist believes that all sensations possess the same value, and the teaching of Epicurus implied exactly the opposite. Farther, Croce holds that to apply the epithet "beautiful" to literary and artistic form, to scientific truth, to intellectual labour, and to moral action is to become involved in an inextricable "verbal labyrinth." We ask why? Did Plato and Aristotle, Herbart, Schiller, Shaftesbury and Hume become lost in such a labyrinth? We have already seen that the idea of the beautiful has a perfectly clear and definite significance in its application both in practical life and in the affairs of art. We have shown that the concept of the beautiful is able to supply a formula which covers all the activities of man and that no other formula has the same universal significance. We do not mean that art should be "moral," and we shall show later that the question of moral content in a work of art should never even arise. But we do mean that any one who has reached a certain level of self-culture knows at a glance what a beautiful act is, what a beautiful intellectual

process is, and what a beautiful work of art is. We can, indeed, accept the definition of Aesthetics as the science of expression; but we cannot see how, apart from feeling, there could be anything to express. Moreover, we cannot see how there could be any effects of genius at all if there were no difference in quality between, let us say, the emotions of Beethoven and the emotions of a man with no passion for music. Croce declares that all that separates the artist from the average man is that the intuition of the former ranges over a wider area so that its characteristic is not intensiveness but only extensiveness. A more lamentable misrepresentation of art and of artists has never been made, and it is especially surprising in the case of a writer who displays such abundant erudition in the history of aesthetic theory. Yet that fact may not be so surprising when we remember the warning already given concerning abstract speculators on the problem of beauty. Those who discuss human sensibility as expressed in art should at least be able to furnish some proof that they are in possession of an inner knowledge of the aesthetic temperament. Croce appears to offer only two main reasons for his belief that there is no real difference between the emotions



of the creative artist and those of the ordinary man. He holds (1) that each of us has within ourselves something of the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the poet and the writer of prose; and (2) that if artists can reveal us to ourselves this is possible only because there is an identity between their imagination and our own and because any difference to be discerned is merely quantitative. He defines beauty as "successful expression" (*espressione riuscita*), and this implies that in a work of art there must exist the closest union between the expression and the idea expressed. But if this is so, and if each of us is an artist, then no human being should find difficulty in reaching the high level of artistic creation. But can it be true that the intuition of the ordinary citizen is the same as the intuition of the man of genius? The biographies of great artists afford sufficient evidence that such men even in the affairs of every day life display an intensity of feeling unknown to average people. One has only to remember what Pope Julius the Second said of Michel Angelo and what Frederick the Great said of Voltaire. Besides, it is more than doubtful that there is an artist in each of us. If there were, the lives of supreme artists would not be, as they often are, a history of calamities,



because the world would have earlier recognized their power. Farther, if the great works of imagination in all the arts were not the result of special passion and vision they would not differ from the results of intellectual labour. Art would possess no distinguishing characteristic. What, then, is it that the aesthetic consciousness adds to mere knowledge if it is not a peculiar intensity of feeling rare in the case of common humanity? Croce says that the painter is a painter because he sees what an ordinary onlooker only feels or sees incompletely. The answer is that it is precisely because the great artists feel as intensely as they see that they are able to bring their emotion and their vision to perfect expression. Croce says that a love song "in its poor simplicity" may be perfect, but that it would be extremely meagre in comparison with "the complex intuition" of a love poem of Leopardi. This statement seems to show a strange failure of insight into the real value of lyrical poetry. Just in so far as that kind of poetry becomes intellectual and complex it ceases to be spontaneous and its aesthetic value is diminished. The songs of Heine and of Herrick have greater lyrical worth than the love poems of Leopardi, whose intellectual power, however, was far greater.

If complex intellectual elements formed the chief part of any aesthetic creation, then art would scarcely differ from science, and it would abandon its own sphere which is the sphere of emotion. If some of Dante's verses were sung by the mule drivers on the Tuscan roads the reason was that that poetry appealed to the heart because of its intensity of feeling. But according to Croce all that happens in art is that "the artistic function ranges over a wider field than what common intuition knows, but that the method is the same and that the difference is not intensive but extensive."<sup>1</sup> His choice of lyrical poetry in support of his theory seems rather unfortunate because the field of lyric utterance is that intensely compact area of emotion which we call the human heart. The simplest songs are always the finest. All that is needed to make a song of genius is an expression of intense individual emotion heightened by the use of the most appropriate language. Let us suppose that the difference between the average mind and the mind of genius can be described by the wholly inappropriate word "quantitative."

<sup>1</sup> "La funzione artistica spazia in campi più larghi con metodo non diverso da quello dell'intuizione comune, la differenza tra l'una e l'altra è non intensiva ma estensiva."—*Estetica*, p. 16.



Quantity of what? Quantity of feeling. But this is precisely a case where quantitative differences create in turn differences that are qualitative, so that the greater volume of feeling of the creative mind is like an alluvial deposit enriching the imagination. This doctrine of intuition in art and of "the aristocracy of the spirit" involves a divorce from the world of reality which, at least for the artist, is always the world of feeling. Undoubtedly in all the greatest work there is a union of intellect and feeling, but it is the volume of feeling, however controlled and even hidden, which makes it art and separates it from the mere labour of the understanding.

We reject as meaningless and out of date all those theories which attempt to deduce art from metaphysics and which exaggerate the element of form. Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* made valuable suggestions regarding the liberating power of the love of the beautiful, but it required a man of imaginative genius who was also a great poet to restate the Kantian doctrine far more attractively and to bring it into relation with the life-process of the artist. Schiller, in fact, showed clearly that apart from the world of the senses there could be no art at all. There must, of course,



always take place an interpenetration of idea and feeling in the work of imagination, but when the sources of feeling are exhausted the work dies.<sup>1</sup> That art implies a philosophical problem there cannot be the slightest doubt. It discovers in the object something which in itself the object does not give. What is this something? It can be nothing but the emotion which the aesthetic instinct brings in its search for beauty. The object or the idea which furnishes the occasion for a work of art is like a harp loaded with music but awaiting the hand that will awaken it. There will be no stir or vibration in the chords unless the fingers touch them. But when we are told that art is "the second emanation of the absolute spirit" we confess that we do not know what the words mean.<sup>2</sup> I should prefer to call art the gay science, and the gayest of them all. It is the universal troubadour. Even when, within the limits of aesthetic criticism, too much emphasis is laid on the question of form, as was done by Winckelmann, we reach a region

<sup>1</sup> "Die Schönheit ist allerdings das Werk der freien Betrachtung, und wir treten mit ihr in der Welt der Ideen, aber, was wohl zu bemerken ist, ohne darum die sinnliche Welt zu verlassen, wie bei der Erkenntnis der Wahrheit geschieht."—Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. ii, p. 1390. Stuttgart, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> F. T. Vischer, *Aesthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, p. 84. Reutlingen und Leipzig, 1846.

of abstraction far removed from the living world of sight and sound and touch which is the only dwelling place of art. According to Winckelmann the highest kind of beauty cannot find even linear expression. It follows only the laws of pure form and even remains, in his view, unindividual and without definite character. This is an hallucinating doctrine. Winckelmann even goes so far as to hold that the finest beauty is like water from the well which is purest when it has least taste. Moreover, he insists that in the expression of the ideal of beauty all passion and all disturbances of the soul must be banished. Here we are obviously among the debris of neo-platonic ideas, but we have abandoned the human world. And if this is art then it ceases to have any real relation with the scene we know. For it involves the evasion of the artist from the things of Time. Yet it is precisely to the things of Time that art owes its origin and meaning. The theory of absolute beauty in Plotinus and Winckelmann involves aesthetic nihilism. By refusing expression to the scene of the senses and by sacrificing itself to mere form art ends in the emptiness of the abstract and is self annihilated. But it is to "this paradise of sweet flesh" that it clings. The weakness of a



doctrine which attempts to sever art and the artist from the world of feeling is betrayed when, for example, Winckelmann, wishing to describe beauty in its least sensuous form, is actually compelled to borrow an image from the senses and from the lowest of them which is taste. Profoundly influenced by the serenity and immobility which characterize Greek art he rejected the representation of individual expression and gesture because they alter the features of the human face and contort the muscles. The ideal is the Laocoon in that impressive portrayal of self mastery in the midst of suffering which also captivated Lessing. It is the theory of Aesthetic which over-emphasises the static quality of beauty, and converts all art into a crystallization of life where rigidity reigns. But the real character of the aesthetic consciousness is its passion, its mobility, its fluidity and variety. Art must not attempt to escape from life, but must constantly return to it. There is neither human nor critical value in the theory that beauty is only a shadow or at best an image of "essential and absolute beauty," because we do not know what the absolute is or what absolute beauty could be. These are vague abstractions which also find expression in such statements as that the



music we hear is only the echo of another and finer music inaudible to the senses. It is the statement of Plotinus. But who can know this? A music inaudible to the senses is nothing to us, and if it is to be heard at all we should need special senses which would still be sensuous. We hold, as we have held throughout these pages, that we begin with the sphere of feeling and that in our deepest and highest emotions we can never quit that sphere. The aesthetic impulse belongs to time, and is the result of human refinement. But it is never the function of art to teach a moral lesson. The beauty which reaches us by means of art has a value in itself. As soon as a motive either of morality or of utility is perceived in any work of art the aesthetic pleasure is immediately spoiled or vanishes altogether. The beautiful, like the true, must be loved for its own sake without any desire for material advantage.

A work of art which has either a moral or an immoral motive behind it is thereby diminished in aesthetic value. For the artist's aim pure or impure becomes the predominant characteristic, and he has thus reduced his art to the function of a mere vehicle for other than aesthetic purposes. In the case of a great allegory like *The Pilgrim's Progress*,

the genius of Bunyan makes us completely forget that we are reading an allegory at all because our interest is fixed on the fortunes of the characters as in a novel. In the case of *Paradise Lost*, Dr. Johnson said that we read it rather as a duty than a pleasure, and that we come away exhausted. Milton's motive towards edification had become oppressive. On the other hand, in the magnificent religious songs of San Juan de la Cruz the orchestration of the poetry holds us under such a spell that the religious intention is all but lost in pure aesthetic delight.<sup>1</sup> But in cold didactic art we are immediately made aware of the motive, and we become bored. Therefore the theory of the function of art announced by so considerable a thinker as Schleiermacher is erroneous because he states that the value of a work of the imagination lies in the fact that it is the fruit of moral activities and that in turn it arouses moral energies in the spectator.<sup>2</sup> This is to misunderstand the entire

<sup>1</sup> See especially "Canciones entre el Alma y el Esposo," *The Oxford Book of Spanish Verse*, page 252. Clarendon Press.

<sup>2</sup> "Wenn wir ein Werk der schönen Kunst für ein Gut ansehen so thun wir es freilich nur in so fern die Thätigkeit, woraus es hervorging, uns eine sittliche ist; aber gewiss auch nur in sofern und nur für die, in welchen es durch sein Dasein sittliche Thätigkeiten und Zustände wesentlich erweckt."—*Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. iii, p. 448. Berlin, 1838.



evangel of art and to confound it with didactic science. The artist must never be a pedagogue. If he sets out to illustrate moral maxims he loses his freedom and severs his art from its true aim, which should be simply the creation of beauty. The moral problem, therefore, does not arise. The fact that a work of art does not conflict with the conventions of the age may be interesting in itself but it has nothing to do with aesthetic criticism. Art is free.

Nevertheless, so all embracing is the idea of the beautiful that it can cause the most profound changes in every sphere of human life. A person morally perfect but aesthetically starved would be an incomplete being. On the other hand, a love of the beautiful manifesting itself in every human relationship would create moral perfection. Our theme, indeed, is that beauty and ugliness which form the two poles of the aesthetic consciousness form likewise the two poles of the consciousness called moral. This is the constructive contribution which the aesthetic view of existence makes to the science and art of living. The doctrine means that both the moral and the purely aesthetic judgments if accompanied by the mere desire of personal gain are neither moral nor aesthetic.



Each in its own sphere must be a source of pure enjoyment. If the beautiful should be loved for its own sake this is as hard a road of virtue as was ever demanded by the sternest moralist. But it is also the road to the only kind of freedom we can ever know or need. It is thus that human thought weaving the aesthetic ideal passes like a shuttle between the world that lies outside us and the world of feeling that lies within. It must be clear to everyone that between the opposed ideas of ugliness and beauty we cannot remain neutral. It is at this stage of his journey that even the sceptic finds the need of an affirmation one way or the other at the moment of contact with practical life. Although everything may be in doubt we are at least aware of the character and the tendency of our own feeling, and the aesthetic imperative is the highest form which human feeling can reach. Therein lies a belief which is capable of awakening and sustaining all our energy and at the very least it gives us something to hold to within the slippery limits of human action. Life is dilemma. That is to say, life always presents a double proposition. There is the straight or the crooked, the high or the low, the good or the bad, the ugly or the beautiful. It is, in fact, a contra-

dictory situation, and the chaos of choice is nowhere more vividly seen than in the sphere of the passions. Like the word "love" the word "passion" is used for opposed and often antagonistic phases of feeling. We talk of intellectual passion and also of the passion for mere gossip. There is a passion for jewellery and a passion for justice, a passion for vengeance and a passion for magnanimity. There is the passion of the astronomer for the stars and of the gastronomer for baked meats. In its lower as well as in its higher forms it is the element of unrest and the dynamo of movement. We have watched it emerging from dim depths and obscure entanglements of the sensual and the sensuous, and becoming moral and then religious. But we claim to have found that in the ascending scale the highest point is the aesthetic ideal. In human action this is the zenith of all zeniths.

The onlooker on life, sceptical or credulous, if he happens to possess a high sensibility often finds himself perplexed by what he sees. He is surrounded by a scene of extraordinary magnificence; he is alive to the beauty of art as well as of nature; he may even know ecstasy, and in the moment of acceptance and delight he is able to say that he loves life. But then he may have



followed the advice of Cervantes who, in one of those phrases which mark the arresting character of his genius, says—"Make your eyes lanterns."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, if we shed too much light on nature or look too closely at her cruelties we become perturbed by what we see. For there are evidently pre-established discords as well as pre-established harmonies. In the search for meaning we become baffled. Moreover, the ultimate solution of every earthly problem seems to be dissolution, because our own planet is only a transitory theatre belonging to a universe in transition. Modern men of science tell us that the universe is actually drifting to some final collapse. We are, in fact, inhabitants of a universe in which everything is compelled to travel whether it will or no, and to travel to its end. For the terminal point in the life of each individual and ultimately of each species is dispersal and disappearance. Suns and stars are travelling in the heavens, and the earth too must go on travelling till it becomes its own urn. In this stupendous movement the human self is involved like a wandering atom among other wandering

<sup>1</sup> *Haz de los ojos lanternas.* In modern Spanish "*lanternas*" was corrupted into "*linternas*." Cervantes preserved the word's Latin form.



atoms in a whole universe which is wandering. If we reckon human life in days and hours instead of years we discover a startling balance sheet. Let us suppose that the average span is seventy years, although millions die in youth and middle age. Seventy years are only twenty-five thousand, five hundred and fifty days. If, now, we reduce that quantity of days to hours we find that the average human life is only a little more than six hundred thousand hours. The facts when placed before us in this manner are almost staggering. For this is our precarious capital of time, and we are all compelled to live on that capital. We carry wrist watches so that, fixed to our persons, we have a mechanical indicator which keeps ticking our lives away. Yet we look carelessly at watch or clock as they clutch each precious moment for a moment, and then let it go. We are disappearing actors on a disappearing stage, but just because the scene is brief we should make it beautiful.

Before making use of words a writer should examine them with the same care with which a diamond merchant examines precious stones or stones which pretend to be precious. In these pages we have tried to scrutinize certain words which mark the main stages of human passion.

We attempted to rediscover the real meaning of the word "belief," and we found that it means love. But we were surprised not to be able to find a definition of the self as the vehicle and pan-technicon of all mental life. We were, therefore, compelled to study only the phases of feeling of a "self" which remains unknowable, and we found the highest phase in a belief in the beautiful as the dynamic motive of action. This book, therefore, should have been a symphony. For it is only in music that feeling finds complete expression. If feeling is the essence of life, and if it is through the sensory gate that the most lasting impressions stream in upon the self, then music remains the most intimate interpreter of the self's contradictory states. It would need Beethoven to construct in a great moving edifice of sound the life history of the self in all the stages of its passion, and still the self would elude him. Since feeling is motion and music is also motion he would make us aware of no fixed condition or changeless entity but of the unrest of the whole sea of being. Music is the encyclopedia of sound. More than any other art it seems to contain the whole dictionary of desire, and we have seen that desire is the core of passion. For music is able to reduce the voice



of longing to a winding and melodious whisper, or, by the blending of all its instruments to bring the emotional storm to its height in the tonal mass of the symphonies of Beethoven. It is the full and authentic evangel of feeling. Moreover it seems to accompany us in our communings with other arts. What is great verse but harmonious sound loaded with thought? In a phrase which has had fortune, architecture was once described—and we could also describe sculpture—as frozen music. And when, for instance, we look at Rembrandt's astonishing picture, *The Supper at Emmaus*, we seem to hear harps in the air. Music makes us feel and almost makes us see the permanence of desire and the brevity of beauty. It is the expression of some strange nostalgia as well as of an inward, incommunicable joy. It was noticed long ago that it is the least representative of the arts and yet the most expressive. We might add that it is also the most nervous. It does not represent outward objects as a statue or a picture can represent them, and, indeed, so far as it attempts to imitate nature it is bad music. The general view of the task and concern of art held by the Greeks was erroneous because it was based on the idea that art can be and ought only to be a copy of the outer world.



We now know that it is something far different and far greater for it is the expression of human emotion in contact with life, and it is therefore a reinterpretation of nature. Why, then, does music bring a special revelation? Simply because it arises out of feeling and then returns to it enriched by experience. In sculpture, poetry and painting we are presented with definite images which we must either accept or reject. A statue or a picture or a poem conveys a settled meaning. We must either take it or leave it, place ourselves alongside the artist or become hostile to him. But of all the arts music is the one that most explores the mind. Its action is more searching. To each listener in an audience it means something different because his own emotions are stirred and they possess their own peculiar character, their own hopes and fears and memories. No doubt, of course, a scientific knower who actually thinks in music might be repelled by the constructive method and the tonal combinations of this or that composer, and would therefore as a hostile critic reject what had been presented to him. Nevertheless, even in this case he must await the cumulative effect, and he must in order to form a perfect judgement submit to the invasion of the

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music. For music actually invades the mind. It moves freely into the recesses of feeling, and it has a power of questioning which no other art has. If the final interpretation of all that we imagine we know is really expressed by what we feel, then it is in music that we become aware of a certain inward freedom and independence. While other arts achieve their effect indirectly and at a distance, music enters into communion with us, and reconciles us, at least for a moment, with this poignant scene of life crowded with things beautiful and mortal.

Finally, those who may think that the parallelism between the aesthetic ideal of art and the aesthetic ideal of life is only a luxurious hypothesis of no practical account, should meditate on the great verse of Schiller who said that to live beautifully is true art and that art in alliance with life is beautiful truth.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle drew attention to the purifying effect of great tragedy as an outlet for the emotions. Millions of human beings feel the ennobling effect of great music. On their return to their own occupations its resonances keep sounding in their ears; in deep chords they had heard

<sup>1</sup> Schön zu leben ist wahre Kunst  
Kunst im Leben das schöne Wahre.



deep warnings; in the call of bugles they had heard a call to courage, and in the *allegro* and *vivace* of a sonorous symphony they had heard the *crescendo* of the forces of life. No direct moral lesson whatever had been intended in those great works of art, and yet the mere presentation of a thing of beauty caused an elevation of the mind. Thus when we pass from the harmonies of the creative imagination to the discords of the daily routine we begin to see the possibility and the need of the blending of an aesthetic impulse with all the activities of man. The choice, in fact, which lies before us is the choice between the fine arts and the foul arts of existence. The problem never ceases to be aesthetic, and the solution is clear. At a moment of history when there is an evident return to a pagan outlook, we should at least attempt to make use of the greatest moral discovery of the pagan world—the doctrine, that is to say, that when an act is beautiful it is good. In the religion of Mithras there were priests called “Runners of the Sun” or “Couriers of the Sun,” who wore gleaming vestments to illustrate their rôle. But in the Athenian army there were soldiers called “Runners in Armour” and they ran *towards* the foe. Here we have the double manifestation



of the aesthetic ideal: In the first case it expressed itself decoratively as religious symbolism; in the second it expressed itself, decoratively too, as the heroic impulse. The instinct for the beautiful, therefore, is not satisfied merely by the passive contemplation of beauty. It demands an act. Although by its means we cannot, indeed, rid the human scene of its poignancy we can rid it of its squalor, material and moral, and by so doing we can rid it of its iniquity. In one of the bombardments of Barcelona during the civil war a bomb thrown by an Italian war plane killed at one stroke eighty-five Spanish children who had been gathered for safety in a shelter. There is something morally and aesthetically wrong with a world which can witness such scenes, and when we remember that nations professing the Christian faith are responsible for them the paradox becomes monstrous. It is not likely that any new world religion announcing its supernatural origin and decking itself in miracles can ever again appear and spread among mankind. But since neither the religions nor the moral codes at present existing have been able to arrest the return to barbarism visible in modern warfare, and since science itself by its inventions has actually ac-

celerated that return, the only remaining hope seems to lie not in the emaciated ideas of systems that have failed but in a fresh ideal of conduct based on the aesthetic education of mankind. We are living in one of the great eras of human unrest. The passions of life are receiving collective and momentous expression. New and impatient demands for new social construction betray the profound changes which have taken place in the feelings of the mass. Political passion venting itself in national ambitions is having the same devastating results on human welfare as had religious passion when it broke loose in persecution and war. Mankind are looking towards the future with the anxiety of dwellers in a seismic area who await the next trembling of the earth. Humanity calls for new guidance from new guides. And, at least, is it not time to prevent any more additions to the vast inventory of human blunders? A writer to whom the aesthetic conception of life owed much wrote concerning what he called "the ethics of the dust." But we need the Ethics of the Dawn. In order to keep the common hearth fire of civilization burning it is no doubt important to blow bellows. But it is even more important to blow bugles to sound a *reveille* to break the moral

slumber of the world. If there is to be a real ascent of the human mind it must be towards a summit where we shall discover the desire for whatsoever things are lovely, not only in outward shape but in thought, purpose, and action, and that summit is the aesthetic ideal in its universal form. It would be, indeed, strange if after so many millions of years of the life of our earth all the monsters should be extinct except the human monster.



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